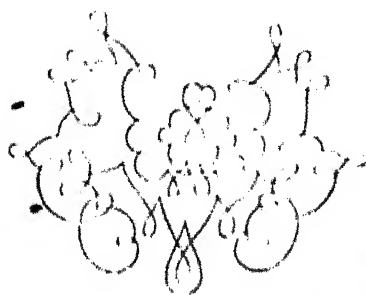


THE VIOLET AND THE VINE

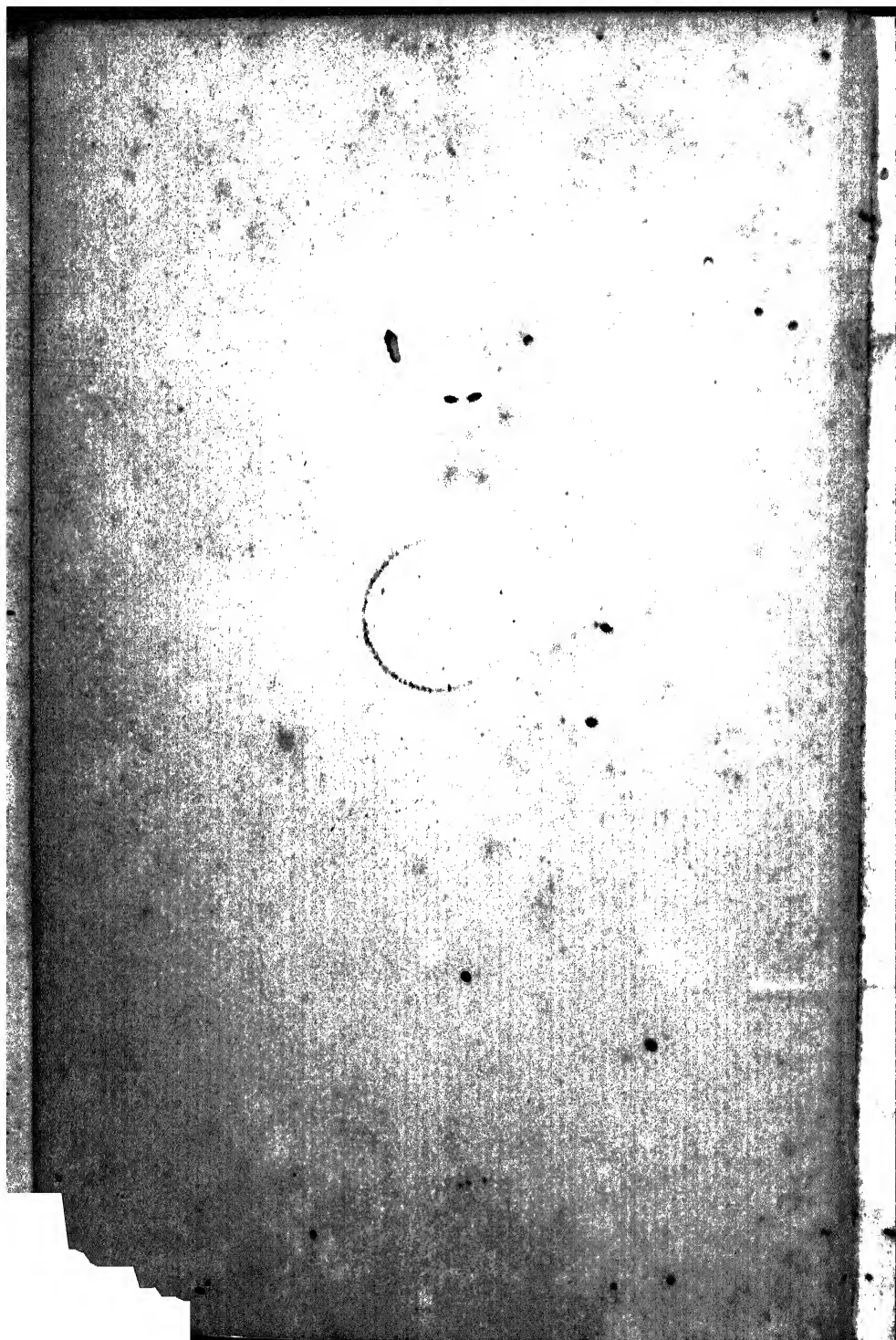
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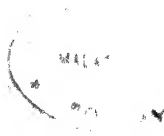
JOHN MURRAY ALBEMARLE STREET

1902





THE TRIAL OF MAN



## PREFACE

A PREFACE can hardly avoid being an impediment to a romance, or would be if it were read. But there are no means other than the Preface affords, whereby thanks for assistance given can be fitly said. I should be worse than ungrateful if I did not acknowledge all that Mr Murray has done during the building of this book, to make it possible. His suggestions have been most valuable, and I have not hesitated to act upon them all, for I recognise (as too few writers, alas, do) the great assistance which a publisher of culture and experience can give. I thank Mr Murray cordially.

*13th December 1901.*

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# THE TRIAL-OF MAN

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## CHAPTER I

### BROTHER MARTIN

IT was the hour of recreation at the Monastery of the Blessed Ascension, when the brethren for one little hour were generally released from the strict regulations of community-life. For a limited number of minutes every monk was again an individual. In the liberty from restraint then to be realised he exercised himself in the manner that best suited his cramped nature.

Nearly all the monks were in the monastery garden. On that afternoon of soft cool air and bright sunshine it was not fitting that any of them should be voluntary prisoners in the darkened cells, windy cloisters, and heavy common-rooms of the vast building which reared itself so proudly in the midst of one of England's wide-spreading gardens of loveliness. So, with but few duty-doing or penance-performing exceptions, the brethren went into the open air to breathe incense from the flowers and

deliver unspoken worship to the uncanonised saints of Nature.

Sounds of laughter and of active voices were to be heard, as in comfortable groups the monks moved about or jested with each other.

It was the hour of liberty—a little oasis within the twenty-three other hours of various forms of restraint; naturally the recreative minutes were appreciated and used by each brother as best suited his personality.

One, Gregory the broad-browed, was dispensing bread-crumbs to a familiar gathering of sparrows; another, Oswald, was collecting fallen green apples; three others were playing bowls in ponderous manner; nine or ten were lying in the sun, giving up their minds to small talk and monastery gossip; one, known as Isidore for twenty-three hours, nicknamed Isaac in the time of recreation, was clambering up a yew tree; Thomas was tormenting a couple of lazy geese; James and Zachary, the muscular ones of the community, had retired into the shadows to engage in a friendly bout of wrestling; Vincent was carving a feminine figure—one of the saints—in wood; Augustine was lecturing Robert on the Schoolmen's mysteries; Demetrius was busied among the flowers with a murderous pair of shears; Clement and Antony were softly talking of the loved ones of the life renounced; Roger was thoughtfully and laboriously cutting an unwieldy branch into a quarter-staff—Roger was to have been a soldier, but an affair of the heart had made him a monk instead; John was eating plums; Edward was thinking sour thoughts by himself of small ambitions

disappointed; Dominick was mending a primitive fishing-rod; Lucius, the treasurer of the monastery, was calculating pennies. It was the hour of freedom—the hour of the triumph of Ego: every brother refreshed his almost smothered individuality in the amusement which his body and mind best loved.

There was one other monk—a dreamer of dreams—who wandered unseen and alone up and down a narrow path in a garden of hollyhock, clove carnations, honeysuckle, and roses—a glorious gathering of wealth of colour and scent. The solitary was Brother Martin, a man not loved by his fellows in the monastery, who called him a visionary because his thoughts were devoted to less mundane objects than were theirs, and a foolish star-gazer because night by night he betook himself to the roof of the monastery to study the ways of the moon and planets. In the monasteries a man with individuality and character was feared rather than loved. Brother Martin was not loved, because he was not rightly understood.

He was a tall, thin, slightly stooping, restless being, a little less than thirty years of age, with pale face, and dark-grey eyes, bright with the light of mental energy. His features were strong rather than handsome; the broad forehead appeared higher than it was, by reason of the close-cut brown hair which crowned the tonsured head; the lips were set. It was the face of a man whose mind is in constant revolt against what fashion has decreed that his body must submit to—the face of an enemy of unreasonable custom: an idealist in social matters; an enthusiast in religion; one of those whom comfort-

lovers and conventionalists try to obscure; very capable but generally incapacitated because of the suspicion, selfishness and sluggishness of dullards, and their own sensitiveness and humility. Such was Martin's character, that was why he took his recreation in solitude among the flowers.

In his hands he held an old "Boke of the Saints"—a gloriously illuminated product of the worshipful artistry of past patient geniuses of the Scriptorium—to whose sacred ashes be beautiful peace! Martin had pored over the volume for days and weeks, reading and studying with eager mind and sympathetic heart, the record of suffering, selflessness, heroism and triumph which are the eternal adjuncts of the blessed martyrs. Oh, to be one of them! to be really a warrior in the militant Church and not bound and trammelled by rules and restraints! Martin was loyal to his vows, but his energetic spirit was yearning for a life of greater practical and religious utility. This old book had stirred the flame of his individuality. Why could he not go forth to the heathen, to the maimed, to the sick, to the ignorant, to those in want, and convert, encourage, stimulate and relieve them? Why could not he possess the glory of work, and if need be earn the privilege of death, for the sake of his God and his fellow-men? Why? Because he was not his own: he was bound, irrevocably bound, as long as the tissues of his body held together, to the seclusion, the sacrifice, and the slain opportunities of the cloisters. Prayer was the only effective instrument he could use for the consummation of his ideals, and he prayed; but he fretted, too, as a strong man will, for that liberty



which means the power of useful personal action and successful work.

With the volume clasped in his arms he walked up and down the narrow garden path. Visions of the happy saints thronged his mind; and tortured by his cramped life, he felt that these saints were the most happy who had eternalised a record of holy work by suffering a death of violence and pain. Yet that spiritual happiness was for ever taken from him; and although he had not ventured to realise it, his soul was in perpetual revolt against the restraints which made him useless and hopeless of doing good. A life of work and then the eternal rest of an untroubled tomb was better than that tomb of life, even with the sure promise of a state of everlasting happiness afterwards.

Excited by the activity of his imagination, Martin went from the flower garden and threw himself down at the foot of a large tree to lie in the scented grass and dream. Gazing at the bright pictures in the Saints' Book, he continued the enjoyment which a luxuriant imagination gave to him.

Through the passages of luminous thought paced a proud procession of the men and women who had earned the aureole. There was sweet St Francis of Assisi, bearing the Stigmata, while he blessed the birds that fluttered by him; Laurence, with limbs prostrate in the fire, looking love on his murderers; Cecilia, with white brow, and blue eyes big with music; Rosa, mute in the presence of her visions; Sebastian, transfixed with arrows against a tree; Alphege, hewn to pieces with Danish swords; Roche, with the bleeding knee; Stephen, making

his Apology, his face beaming as he saw the vision of Christ; Martin, his namesake, of Tours, giving his cloak to the beggar; and many others:—hallowed be their names!

What a world was that in which they lived!—A constant dwelling under the eyes of God, seeing and seen by the Being they lived and died for. He was not vagueness to them. They saw Him from Head to Feet and recognised Him as their Lover, their Father, and their God! Glorious company in a glorious world! Happy, completely happy saints—the victorious, beaten, bleeding multitude! By man murdered—by God received! Oh, to die for Christ! The pain and the victory!

Martin breathed quickly with excitement. His blood beat—beat through his heart; his pulses throbbed, his eyes wore the light of the vision-maker. He was tasting Heaven already—the most fortunate of that colony of monks!

The chapel bell called him to None, and later it pealed for Vespers; but he heeded it not—he had not heard it. A quietness had fallen on the earth, the sun was sinking into its place of gold and purple, the flowers were beginning to close their cups, the grass was becoming damp, the earth expressed an odour; some birds were twittering, a distant rookery discharged a volume of caws, two or three insects buzzed, and fluttered, and hummed; the leaves of the tree above rustled and sighed, a dog barked and a sheep-bell tinkled, a bat began to take its nervous flight; the day was merging into the grey of twilight, still Martin lay beneath the tree, fingered his beloved book, and dreamed.

He still could see the saints. No longer a suffering multitude, but a glad victorious throng, marching in an eternal procession to the clang of cymbals, the influence of sweet sounds, and their own brave chants. The maimed limbs, the bruised bodies, the bleeding brows were healed; new life and renewed strength ran in their veins. The glorious exaltation of death was turned into the happiness of a heavenly existence, expressed by song, and work, and laughter.

Martin's reverie was broken by an angry voice. He looked up—the brethren had gone; evening was falling; the shame of neglected duties brought the blood to his face. He sprang to his feet and bent his head. The Superior of the monastery stood before him—a man, ecclesiastical, of iron and anger.

"The bell has called Vespers."

"Vespers, Father! I did not hear it."

"Not hear it! Foolish! I heard it, and I was on an errand nearly a league away. You must do penance for this, Brother Martin, fasting and prayer and the lash of the scourge shall torment your idle body and curb your wandering mind until Vespers has ended on St Stephen's Day. This holy house I rule; and where I rule there shall be obedience, awe, and fear! This is not your first offence against the habits of our Order. The brethren have told me of your creeping to the turret at night time, not to pray, no!—nor to submit your body to the blessed rigours of solitude, no!—nor to win pain and cold, that by reducing the joys of the body, you might gain spiritual strength, no!—but idle and prayerless, to gaze at

the stars. Those luminaries were placed in the heavens as reminders of the presence of God, so to drive the watcher to the practice of prayer; but not one of the brethren who have gone up to gaze at your movements—in the interests of our Order, and the government of the monastery—has ever seen your knees bent or your head bowed before those sparkling sermons of Him we worship, or in awe of the Maker of those marvels and of us. No, this star-gazing is merely an idle amusement on your part, and that is not permitted by our Order. The night is given for sleep, and prayer, and soul-struggles with the Evil One and his legions of fiends. Too many of your nightly hours have been spent in looking at the lights of the sky and not in gazing into that blessed place which is beyond the sky, where the saints are in their glory, and Christ's Mother is at her prayers, and God is on His Throne. Say nothing! There is no explanation other than I have given of your conduct; it is utterly, thoroughly bad. You are the black sheep of this holy abode—a forgetter of your vows; with a proud neck you keep from your brethren and are not loved of them. Yes, Brother Martin, I have not neglected to notice your doings; and many a true tale about your carelessness and negligence and self-esteem have the brethren brought to me. I am ashamed of you! Mend your ways. In prayer you are a sluggard; I have seen. You fast—but not to humiliate your flesh, no; but because you do not love food—that is not strengthening to the soul. But of your dilatoriness and misconduct I say no more now. Let me see an improvement, and at

once! Till Vespers on St Stephen's Day you are to do penance; bread and water are to be your sole meat and drink, and only twice a day are you to eat; for four hours every night beginning within this hour are you to kneel before the High Altar, with prayers to mend your heart and a whip to scourge your body, inwardly and outwardly to humiliate your flesh, to ask forgiveness for your carelessness, and to lose that pride, my son, which is your besetting sin. Go to the chapel, Martin, and earn the power which alone can battle the tempter. Go!"

With a heavy heart, but still clasping the old book, Martin turned, and, followed by the Superior, paced sadly towards the chapel. Many a monk who saw the progress of the two turned aside to hide a grin of joy. Martin, the stiff-necked, the solitary, the dreamer, was caught wrong-doing, and compelled to pay the penalty! Food for the morrow's hour of gossip! Ha, ha, ha! The unkind happiness soon went round the brotherhood.

Martin reached the chancel of the old chapel—with its splendid arched window, and golden altar flashing with lights and precious stones, its mellowed tombs holding all that was mortal of the monastic aristocrats of bygone days, its pictured walls, its atmosphere of incense—and sank upon his knees. He buried his face in his hands and expressed his remorse in one convulsive sob. His heart was scorched by the Superior's rebuke and what had been said of the ill-love borne to him by the brethren. He knelt in bitter agony; the flow of tears would have eased his feelings, but the recent penetrating

words of censure had made him too wretched for any such relief. He knelt and prayed in bitterest affliction.

The pater of footsteps—sandals on the stone pavement—was heard approaching. An officious hand snatched the old Saint's book up from the floor beside him; scourge was thrown down in its place. Then his cassock was unfastened and roughly pulled from off his shoulders; it fell in deep brown folds about his waist. His white flesh appeared like marble in the half light of the sacred place. The scourge was thrust into his hands. Then the renewed pater of sandals retreating told him he was alone beneath the altar, with his penance before him.

*Misere mei, Domine!*

## CHAPTER I.

### BEYOND THESE VOICES

THREE hours of the weary penance had passed, and Martin, worn nigh unto death with the rigour of the watching, the fasting, the prayers and the whip, was lying prostrate before the altar, a victim to monastic discipline. He lay there hardly breathing; his eyes were closed, his folded hands supported his throbbing brow, his heart was almost numb, for the punishment had been heavy. The greatest of all tyrants is a too sensitive conscience.

But comfort came, as comfort must come at last, to the brave heart. While Martin's body was still prostrate with weakness, his mind recovered its strength and his imagination gave him comforting joyful dreams. The saints were there; they had come to salve his pains and give him gladness. Nay more, he himself through his sorrow was one of the honoured army—the elect of Heaven. His heart recovered strength with a throb. Happiness is a famous medicine. But the aching, starved, and stiffened limbs as he tried to move them, rebuked his vanity. A martyr—he! A saint—he! No! he was a monk, the victim of a system, the unfavourite of a monastery; and at this bitter recollection the

*The first*  
agony of his fetterdom recurred. No monk can be a martyr! His hopes had led him astray. With heavy heart he struggled to his knees and began again the passionate round of prayers. God! let me be of use; oh, let me be of use!—that one appeal would be among them. Then obedient to the rule of his Superior, Martin scourged himself, until with back scored and bleeding he again fell forward in a half-swoon, exhausted.

The sound of distant music crept into his ears; he opened his eyes wide, listening. Then he could hear a regular soft sound like the cadence of mighty moving wings. Perhaps it was the breeze of midnight finding passage through the empty chapel. But Martin's imagination suggested a visitation of triumphant saints. The music came louder—nearer: it seemed to be a strong voice in the distance sweetly singing a happy song. The melody and the regular wafting sound brought balm to his nerves. He rose once more to his knees, holding by both hands to the rail which divided the Holy of Holies of that Christian church from the chancel. Hungrily he absorbed the joy and the comfort with which the distant music fed him. With ears alert he was listening, with eyes intent he looked at the golden altar, and then above the tabernacle, where the sacramental elements were kept, at the painted window with its story of the death of the Life-Giver.

Through the great window the white moonlight was streaming: it bathed Martin and the marble floor in a flood of silver glory. The bleeding penance-maker for the short part of an hour had his own halo of the pure moonbeams.



Suddenly it seemed as if the splendid window parted in two and opened outwards, letting in a volume of light, almost blindingly bright. Martin closed his eyes for the moment: he opened them to see a glorious figure sail in on extended wings and alight at the foot of the Altar. It was an angel—a visitant from Heaven—a majestic personality bearing the flashing lineaments of one of God's seraphim. His head and his face, which shone with dazzling whiteness, were crowned with a helmet decorated on both sides with winglets. Yellow hair fell in wavy glistening locks to his shoulders. He was clad in the armour which God's warriors wear. At his sides were wings now folded—golden they appeared to be at first, but as Martin's eyes became used to the brilliance he saw that they sparkled with many different and continually changing colours. From the angel's presence radiated gladdening light: he was clothed in a holy aureole.

"Hail, brother, hail to you!" he said in a voice of surpassing sweetness. "In the name of the Highest! Hail!"

Martin still kneeling, looked up at his visitor as one amazed. Who was this majestic being, and why was he there? Was it Death? Had Azrael come to him? If so, Death was splendid and very beautiful. But the angel, divining the thought in Martin's mind, said, "I am Zuron. My mission to you is not of death: it is of life—of renewed life, and of splendid opportunity." My brother, you are the most favoured among men: God places upon you a privilege which would only be given to one whom He trusts and loves. You are anxious for a life of positive utility.

*The visit  
of the angel*

This house with its iron rules and blinded notions, although an excellent institution for the dull, is a torture-prison to you. You have capacity of strength and love which God would use to its utmost. Are you prepared to bear a mighty burden, to endure extremes of cold and heat, hunger, weakness, and most alluring temptation, to give up all the joys of this earthly life—and they are more to you than you can estimate or realise at this moment of sorrow and pain—aye, even to suffer death; and only to please God? Are you ready to endure all this, my brother?"

Martin's brain was in a whirl of excitement. Was this at last the opportunity he so often prayed for? He bowed his head and trembled. He knew he was on the brink of the mighty abyss whose base is rich with hope but whose depths are hidden under clouds of awe.

"Gladly—gladly!" was all that in a broken and a wearied voice he could say.

"Then come at once!"

Martin rose with painful effort to his feet, drew his garment over his smarting shoulders, and tightened his girdle with its three knots.

"I am ready," he said slowly; then he knelt once more and crossed himself and prayed. "O God, give me strength that I may do my duty as becomes thy servant. Wherever thy Hand guideth me, may my feet tread without hesitation. In the valleys of fear through which I may pass, give me the grace to look for that brightest of all stars—to remember that most helpful of all hopes—thy love. I am very weak, O God my Father, but with thy aid I can be made strong!"

The angel stooped and blessed Martin. "Come, brother, be brave; it is time." So saying he took the monk in his arms, spread the mighty wings and sailed through the opened window, which closed behind them with a sigh, out into the unclouded night.

So Martin left the Monastery of the Blessed Ascension; only the scourge, wearing its suggestion of blood-stains, lay on the chancel floor, to remind the brethren of the penance which had been but partially done, and of that lonely one who had been condemned to do the penance. For many days—for weeks—for months which lengthened into years—the monks waited for the return of Martin. The love which they had denied him when he was with them was born in his absence and lived in the form of more than one tradition. But the after-love of the once-negligent is damnation to the heart that owns it. The Superior who had set Martin his penance lies buried in the chapel; the brethren who smiled at the conviction of the star-gazer, the saint-lover, the mystic, the fool, the solitary, have all gone to their places in the land of waiting. May they have rest, and when the good God chooses, a joyful re-awaking! For, after all, they were to be pitied.

The angel alighted in the monastery garden, and holding Martin by the hand, led him to the tree beside which he had read and dreamed over the Saints' Book. On the very spot where, but a few hours before, the Superior had uttered his rebuke, Martin discovered a winged chariot of flashing golden flame awaiting him. This was the means of his flight from the old life to a new place wherein he

was to know the joys of usefulness. Yet, the passing from the home of many quiet hours could not be entirely pangless. Martin loved the brethren although they had not loved him. He rejoiced at the re-birth of opportunities, and yet was saddened at the thought that the Monastery of the Blessed Ascension was to know him no more. The old turret whence he had gazed at the mysterious sparkling worlds in the heavens, the musty scriptorium with its treasure-store of illuminated manuscripts, the cloisters in whose stony shadows he had seen the remains of more than one monk buried, the little cell where he had sighed and slept and prayed before the wooden crucifix, which had often trembled under his kisses, the garden of flowers where so many of his dreams had come to him—all were to be left, it was the hour of an eternal farewell. A sigh burst from his lips and he bowed his head with sorrow. Good-bye, good-bye! Martin went to the flowers and plucked some blossoms. Hastily he fastened them into his girdle and guarded them with loving hand. Old house, old friends, old earth, old life, farewell, farewell!

Martin stepped into the chariot, and for the few moments of separation, closed his eyes in prayer. The wings of the chariot were unfolded, and upward, swiftly upward, it travelled unto a new place. The earth knew Brother Martin no more.

Rapidly the world was left behind. The night air struck chill, and Martin covered his head with his cowl. Upward, upward, upward sped the chariot, following the angel who led the way towards the unknown bourne.

Martin then stood, with hands clasped, gazing down on the sleeping world, which—so gentle was the motion of the soaring chariot—seemed to be ever falling and ever dwindling. Very soon the monastery was lost in smallness, and the country appeared a vast, dark plain, broken here and there with rivers and flood, on which the moonbeams gleamed, making them appear as polished silver. In the course of a brief time such details as rivers, lakes, and seas were lost to the eye, and the earth itself, a great sphere, loomed and dwindled. Then, as the chariot went onward, the earth appeared as a crescent where the sunlight kissed a fringe of it. Martin knew the glories of the sky; he had watched the planets night after night, and on parchment recorded their migrations; the constellations were to him as familiar as the Magnificat: many of the stars had been regarded by him as brothers; he knew them, recognised their colours, gained comfort from their constancy; but this aspect of the world on which he had lived was new, strange, and awful. What a mite was man! Merely an atom on that receding sphere which was soon to appear to him as an atom itself, and then would disappear, lost in vast distance. Oh, the majesty of the Creator, and the vanity of some of His creatures!

A great sorrow seized the heart of Martin as he recognised the comparative meanness of man, and the weakness of human strength. He turned his eyes from the dwindling globe: the contemplation of that old habitation of his filled him with exquisite pain. He knelt on the floor of the chariot, and knew humility. He never saw the world again.

When Martin had sufficiently recovered his personal confidence to release his eyes from the sanctuary of his hands, he looked before him and saw that they were rapidly approaching another sphere--this one bleak and bare--a globe majestic in its loneliness, terrible in its nakedness, horrible through its silence. It was the moon, on whose placid face Martin had often gazed with admiration and awe; but now, as the chariot bore him speedily towards it, the moon terrified him with its vast accumulation of wasted matter, its dreadful lifelessness, its eternal greyness, its ever-present suggestions of the sepulchre, its sameness and its silence. He shuddered and was impelled to scream; the recollection of the terms of his recent prayer came to him, however, and, with an effort, he was brave. But the moon was very horrible, and the nearer he was borne to it the greater grew his terror. His face was livid, his hands clutched one another; the flowers in his girdle shrivelled; they were the children of a kindlier place than that which Martin then saw.

*The moon  
on the lifeless  
moon*

The angel alighted on the pinnacle of a mighty rock. He waited with folded wings until the chariot, drawn it seemed by invisible intelligences, approached near to him, then, pointing with right hand at a slope down which was scored the mark of a dead water-course, he opened his wings and flew to the place indicated.

Martin, who had not lost his fear, was driven by a terrible suspicion to speak.

"Is this my destination?" he asked.

"No, brother; but you must wait here while I bear a greeting to one of the guardians of this place. I

have a mission to perform. When that is done I shall return and lead you without pause to your ultimate destination. This—the place of your life and work? No, you have many joys and privileges to come. But of that it is not for me to speak. I am but Zuron, one of the messengers of the Highest. My mission is to conduct you to a sage of the spirit-world, who will test and instruct you. You are highly favoured, brother. Of all the multitude of mortal beings who have breathed and are breathing on these myriads of worlds,” and with sweeping arm Zuron pointed round the heavens at stars which, owing to the then white daylight, Martin’s eyes could not distinguish, “not one has experienced what you are going to know, nor even imagined what you are to be privileged to see; but be patient, brother, and pray. I shall soon return.”

Martin had been listening with breathless attention. He wanted to ask many questions, but just then the chariot reached the appointed slope, and, assisted by Zuron, he descended from it.

The ground beneath his feet was so cold that it pained him, much as burning fire gives pain to the naked flesh, and the glare of the grey-white rocks seared his eyes. There was no colour, nor variety, nor softening through distances to relieve the tension on his sight. As far as his vision could extend—and from the slope on which they alighted that was very far—there was nothing but great, bare, rugged, cold, white, awful rocks, naked, lonely, silent; interspersed with dead plains; bounded by the craters of defunct volcanoes and huge mountains which accentuated the horrors of the scene—they were so harsh and grim



and gaunt. But even more terrible than the bareness, was the silence that prevailed. There are no voices in the moon; at least, such as mortal ears could hear. No rivers sing their songs or murmur their liquid plaints; no insects hum; no song-birds carol, at least to the human sense. The moon is a sphere dead. A monument of the poverty of mere matter, a relic of exhausted life, a place of dread.

It became at once intolerable to Martin. Before the angel had departed he cried: "Do not leave me. I am afraid!"

"Afraid, brother? There are no tempters or temptations within thousands of leagues of the moon. The devils do not trouble dead worlds or the husks of dead men. Be brave!"

"But it is so lonely and horrible."

"Horrible? Ah, men have limited sight: you shall see the moon as angels see it." Zuron leaned forward and kissed Martin's brow. Then the angel took his flight, and had soon sped beyond the belt of mountains at the horizon.

Martin looked around, as one who has experienced a miracle, and to his poor human conception it was a superb miracle.

It seemed as if films had been taken from before his eyes. He was endowed with livelier sight. The moon appeared no longer dead and colourless. The ground on which he stood had ceased to be cold and bare. Soft grass covered the floor of the moon, some ambitious blades clasped him to the ankles; its delicate greenness, so pleasant to the eyes after the strain of the unrelieved greyness, stretched on and on, softening all the harshness which had previously been



so hurtful; up and down the slopes it lived and waved, through dingles and dells, and over the unbroken meadows which comprised the once bare plains; it mounted the hills and craters and partly climbed the great mountains, many of which now appeared purple in the haze of distance, though the summits of nearly all those in sight were crowned with snow. Innumerable wild flowers grew among the grasses. Martin saw many that reminded him of those he had left behind in the monastery garden; but these new flowers of the vivified moon gave him particular pleasure, because of the variety of new shapes and colours which he saw among them. Then the pleasant murmur of flowing, then the massive music of falling waters greeted his ears. The plain which stretched before him now was crossed by many streams and rivers, and to the right of the slope on which he and the winged chariot were, was a steep cascade which, as it fell into the abyss where it was lost, gave forth a circular rainbow. It was a very lovely diversified scene, and for some time Martin enjoyed its beauties. He was grateful to Zuron for the joy which through the new faculties of vision had been given him. Gratitude! that reminded him! Sinking on his knees, he bowed his head to the ground, and, with hands and face buried among the flowers, prayed with a joyful and a fearful heart. After a while he rose, with a keen sense of happiness in his breast, and saw Zuron returning with another celestial hierarch.

"This is the fortunate mortal, brother," said Zuron to his companion, as soon as they had alighted on the slope.

is who  
said to him

And to a

was said

the beautiful

Spirit of the Moon

The new-comer, a being of great beauty but of less brilliance than Zuron, touched Martin's head with his fingers and murmured a blessing; at the same time gazing with very interested eyes at him.

"Be brave and strong, my brother," he said. "God loves the brave of heart and the strong of faith. You will need your own prayers in the time to come and shall have ours; but fear not. You have unconquerable strength if you keep your faith and lose not your humility."

"What is my future to be? What kind of work am I to do?" Martin, venturing, asked, with lively desire expressed in his eyes and gesture.

"Wait!" was the only answer. It was Zuron who spoke. So Martin determined to be content.

Then Zuron, taking his hand, led him to some trees and plucked fruit; and Martin, who suddenly realised that he had grown very hungry, ate with keen appetite the delicious juicy, half-peat, half-melon-like gourd, until his hunger and thirst were satisfied. Plucking more of the fruit, Zuron and Martin carried it to the chariot.

"Farewell," said Zuron, to the sentinel spirit of the moon. "Greetings to the comrades." The two angels clasped hands and kissed.

"Zuron, beware of Kezeel," cried the other. "I am sure that I saw him, or, if it were not he, one of his company of the evil enemies, flying fleetly towards the way you take; his appearance means mischief. Mortal, fare you well. God's blessing kiss you! Be bold, and lose not your humility: fare you well."

Martin ascended into the chariot which resumed the journey.

## BEYOND THESE VOICES 23

For a few moments Zuron stayed in converse with his brother angel, then with mighty strokes of his wings, swiftly followed, until he came up with the speeding chariot.

"Sleep, brother," he said to Martin. Martin sat on the floor of the car and slept

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joined in the feast. Still they went on their journey. It seemed endless, and to Martin, so far as the momentary outlook was concerned, most monotonous. There was absolutely no change in the scene; it was nought but a continuous vista of grey space, with here and there in the extreme distance a solitary beaming star, or a sun with its planetary system, or a great nebula of luminous vapour where God was creating a new world. Twice a comet, with its fiery tail, swept onward past Zuron and his charge, and once they went through a cloud of meteors; but except for these tremendous manifestations of force, there was nothing to interest Martin in that period of travel.

It was, however, a very profitable time for him personally. He found himself in such a situation, that he was able to realise, as he could have done nowhere else, man's relation to God. He understood the truth as to the divine existence, and at the same time saw, what in his monastic life he could not possibly have seen—for in what human estate does mere man assume more?—that the human claim on God was very minute; yet that claim had been wonderfully rewarded by the Creator. Man had life bestowed upon him, and life meant, not merely transitory existence on the crust of a planet, but the happiness and work of an after-death experience, where the immortalised mortal has the privilege of assisting God in His universal acts of creative beneficence. To obtain this privilege of eternal joy and celestial service in the second life, the brief existence on one or other of the multitudinous worlds was necessary to develop the spiritual faculty, which was only attained

by a continuous striving to perform duty according to the opportunities of the physical state and at the constant sacrifice of self.

Martin pictured to himself some of the persons known in his earlier life on the earth, and their practices. His monastic experience he, for the present, did not review. He remembered the money-maker, whose joy was to get gold somehow; the dress collector is the first of these! Then he recalled more than one master of a manor, himself decorated creatures, swollen with importance, ever a-fume at the petty negligences of vassals. The meanness of worldly majesty! the violent blindness of the glory-seeker! And these are beings blessed with the moral sense!

Other types of men and various kinds of limited ambitions entered Martin's mind; but the hopeless-ness of it all gave him agony, and, in a spasm of poignant sorrow, he rose in the chariot and wrung his hands. Oh, that when on earth, instead of being reduced and bound to ceremonies and regulations in the monastery, he might have used his energy in the attempt to alter the habits of his fellow-creatures! What an opportunity there was lost! But it was useless to repine; men must work out their own salvation and escape by their own will and methods from the self-forged fetters of convention and habits which blind them.

Martin did not wish to think of these things further, doing so was painful and of no use, but without doubt he would have been forced back upon them by his circumstances if it had not been for an occurrence which at once fixed his attention.

Zuron had been flying above, softly chanting— suddenly his song ceased. A fierce light shone in his eyes, he descended to the side of the chariot and flew protectingly round and round and over it, as does a mother bird round and about her little ones when they are threatened by fowl of prey.

Martin strained his eyes, trying to discover the object of Zuron's angry glances and the cause of his strange perturbation; but he could see nothing, not even a solitary star—there was nothing, so far as he could realise, to relieve the greyiness of space.

So it continued for a time, until suddenly another personality flew into view, and came with wonderful fleetness directly towards them. This was an angel, very powerful, and possessed of some majesty, but not shining with that glorious brightness which irradiated Zuron. The light that surrounded him was lurid—he carried with him as he flew an evil aureole of flames. His face, despite the pride beneath which he and his fellows strive to hide the pain of Helldom, was working with the pangs of ever-present agony.

"Kezrel!" said Zuron slowly and seriously. Remembering the words of the moon-angel, Martin concluded this was an enemy to dread. The eyes of Kezrel confirmed Martin's conclusion.

The unhappy angel, possessed of the daring of despair, flew towards the chariot, gazing enquiringly and fiercely at Martin. Zuron was floating on extended wings between the enemy and his ward. He was very keen and wary.

Kezrel sailed up impudently close, and then in one circular sweep passed by to a little distance.

Martin stood like an image of stone, frozen with fear, fascinated as a bird is said to be by the eyes of a threatening serpent. Zuron was watching the enemy closely.

Suddenly Kezrel turned. With right arm raised he poised a spear which until then had been hidden. He hurled it, like a flash of red lightning it flew towards Martin, who stood motionless, paralysed—but its passage was stayed. With a mighty effort of his wings Zuron sprang forward, and caught the shaft ere it had reached its target. Then throwing the spear into the chariot, he turned and flew towards Kezrel. The angels, each with a battle-cry, dashed madly against one another, caught one another in a wrathful grip, and wrestled furiously. So far as appearances went, they seemed equally matched, but for a time Kezrel had the better of the combat.

Martin could not but see the details of the struggle. He was shocked—terrified—helpless. The thought of possible human strife had always been agony to him, and this was the strife of angels! He could only cry out to Heaven for help for Heaven's champion. From that moment of agonised prayer the tide of victory turned. Still the angels fought and strained desperately—it was a battle of greater than giants—but Zuron was succeeding now.

Slowly Kezrel's efforts became less epergetic. He was being defeated, and a most baneful expression of baffled desire and increased bitter hate against all things not of Hell was throned in his face. The countenance of a powerful devil defeated is the ugliest thing there ever has been or ever will be.

*The evil  
is defeated  
the hell  
is followed*



## ZURON FULFILS HIS MISSION 29

Martin shuddered to see it, but he could not remove his glance from that yellow face with the fierce green eyes. •

There was a desperate rally on the part of Kezrel. A fragment of time was crowded with tremendous incidents. Zuron retained his ascendancy. A cry from Martin's champion rang out, and was answered by blasphemy from Kezrel. The latter tried with a violent effort to tear himself away. But Zuron caught and held him fast; then, raising his writhing enemy in his arms, he hurled him down homewards—Hellwards. The devil fell like a stone, attracted, as all things of evil are, to the root and centre of all evil; just as beings and things of good are drawn certainly and irresistibly to Heaven. He turned over and over; then, with one wing fluttering, attempted to stay his panic-stricken tumble, but still he fell—down, down, mercilessly, continuously down, striving with one wing to restrain the swiftness of descent; the other wing hung motionless; it was useless—broken. In the last desperate struggle Zuron had partly torn it from its socket. An unspeakable sense of relief lightened Martin's mind, when at last Kezrel disappeared in the depths below. He had known fear, now he knew the joy of real safety: he had been threatened by one of the dreadful army, and seen that one utterly vanquished. He looked up to express thanks to his deliverer; but Zuron's eyes were gazing blindly frontwards: he was looking into a kingdom of thought, his lips were moving, his arms were crossed on his breast. Martin respected the angel's abstraction. He dared not disturb his reverie or his prayers; and so in a silence

30 THE TRIAL OF MAN

which was crowded with thoughts, the angel and the man continued their upward way.

The journey was to Martin now no longer monotonous. Among the thoughts which the battle had occasioned, this one would intrude: Why am I where I am? Why am I an object of so much solicitude and interest that one of the enemies of goodness wished to slay me? But he did not dare to ask Zuron. He must wait and gather wisdom, patience, and the strength which is gained by PRAYER.

Gradually the way became higher, brighter, better. An atmosphere of gladness floated round them. Inspired by its cheerfulness Zuron began again to sing what sounded to Martin a victorious battle-chant; it was in a tongue beyond his wisdom, but from the fire, the glory, and the gratitude which shone in the angel's face, it must have recalled scenes and memories highly triumphant, though its joy was interspersed with phrases of sadness. Later, Martin learned the origin of the song. It was that rebellion was over, and Satan with his deluded host had been driven from that Heaven into which they had endeavoured to introduce hatred, revolt, and an armory of sins.

Encouraged by the infectious joy of the angel's song Martin wished to sing too. But the old Latin hymns, all the songs he knew, seemed very weak and inadequate at that moment. He might have sung of old remembrance, but he decided to be silent; he worshipped by listening.

So they journeyed on, and from time to time other

angels, chanting, flew towards them and accompanied them, and before long, Martin found himself surrounded by a body-guard, the most brilliant, joyful, and wonderful, that ever could and ever will attend a being still robed in the vesture of mortality.

As Zuron was flying very near to him, Martin, on an impulse, put to the angel a question which had been evolving in his mind.

"Is Heaven my destination?"

Zuron pointed towards a part of the firmament glowing with glad roseate light, the luminance being reflected on the faces and wings of his spiritual companions as they all breasted joyfully homewards.

"Yes, brother, Heaven is your present destination, and Heaven is there. We are within the sphere through which, except by the express command of the Highest, no fiend nor man can go. But, look! one poor, baffled spirit, the least of the original rebels misled by the arch-enemy, has escaped from Hell, has flown through space, and now strives ceaselessly to beat his way through this sphere of celestial influence, in a passionate desire to reach Heaven's gate, there to plead for forgiveness and restoration."

Martin then saw an angel, dark and pain-stricken, with tears on his earnest face, moving his wings with the energy of despair, striving, with cries of remorse, to force a passage through the holy sphere bounding God's place. The wretched one's wings moved constantly and frantically in unprogressive flight; with weary hands he continually beat his breast, he never ceased to shed tears of bitter repentance and to sob remorse; but still his efforts seemed fruitless. He could not push his way through that circle of

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Heaven's influence which is foreign and impassable to all but the inhabitants of the happiest of places. The sight reminded Martin of a caged bird striving to force its way to liberty, with fluttering wings pressing its breast against invisible bars. But this was cause for deeper pathos than any worldly sight.

As they went past him, many of the angels accompanying Martin called cheerfully to him.

"Courage, Peruel! Hope!"

With such words the angels strengthened the reviving virtue of their old foe.

Then said Zuron to Martin: "Of all the vast hordes of rebels who, led by Satan, strove to depose the Creator, but only succeeded in first creating Sin, Peruel alone has practically tried to regain the honour and virtue lost. The devil-world is now as ever rebellious and malign. Now as ever are the evil ones promoting designs antagonistic to the plans of God. By now, Kezrel will have reached Hell and told his prime lord of your appearance with me, and very soon will the enemies be on your track, searching through the worlds which crowd infinity until they find you. By attempting to destroy your virtue and your faith they will endeavour to wreak devilish revenge—the vengeance which is supremely mean—on God. But be brave, my brother. Fidelity and trust are the first strengths: you are quite safe if you place your security in Him whom we adore. So have no fear, you need not be afraid!"

Martin listened hungrily, while with pitiful heart he watched the diminishing figure of Peruel. Brave spirit! he thought. There is hope for the worst if only they will make efforts to obtain it.

As they progressed new angels appeared and joined them: all were singing: as the spiritual ones joined company they gave to each other the greetings of glad comradeship. Gradually they formed a splendid procession. Zuron led, then followed the chariot bearing Martin, then in proud ranks the seraphim and warriors of God, flying with wings which flashed forth multitudinous, diversely coloured rays, and chanting one grand united song. Martin gazed and listened with rapture, until the rapture drew him to a strange sense of sadness, and the sadness to deep humility.

In this way the honoured mortal approached the summit of human hopes. He was surrounded with glories and at the head of a procession of all pageants and processions not to be equalled for power and beauty, majesty, wisdom, love, and delight. But the gate of Heaven is very terrible to the body of man. Material things tremble before the manifestations of the spiritual estate, and Martin trembled at the sight of that supreme portal, although it was the gate of Hope. He knelt and prayed, and gazed, until his eyes were dazed with the exceeding brightness, and he bowed his head. His human heart sank lower, and he shed some tears.

"Courage, brother," were the last words Zuron said to him, before the aerial journey was at an end. "No faint heart ever passed beyond Heaven's gate: your mourning is out of place here. The only lamentations the angels hear are those of the ill-treated, the despised, and the neglected of the inhabitants of the worlds; the only sound of sorrow welcomed within these walls is that which comes from

the penitent heart. So have courage, brother. You are going amongst those who love you. Be glad and sing, for Heaven is the place of songs! Hark to the chorus of welcome—listen to the music—see the cycles of celestial ones robed in light, raising their voices, playing their instruments, expressing love and life and light. Praise the Creator. Praise God's Son. Praise His Holy Name! Courage, brother—courage, courage! and be glad!"

Zuron lifted Martin from the chariot which then passed on within, away from his sight, and the angel and the man stood beneath the burning portal which lived with countless lights as though constructed of precious gems, each containing a vital flame—and watched the long procession of singing angels pass to their various places in the Realm of Perfect Delight. When the procession had passed, Zuron took Martin's hand and spoke to a shining one of sad, sweet countenance, who had approached and was standing in the centre of the glorious entrance. "Broon, my brother, here is your charge," then turning to Martin, he kissed his brow. "Farewell, brother. I go to kneel by the throne of the All-Father. Oh, the joy of being in Heaven once more!"

Zuron spread his wings and flew hastily upward above a bright stairway. Martin looked after him, but the angel was very soon lost in the haze of great brightness.

Broon touched Martin's head with the hand of benediction, and said the one word, "Welcome."

## CHAPTER IV

### BROON AND HIS PENANCE

BROON led the way and Martin followed. As they went along the silver and azure pathway through a coming and going concourse of spirits, Martin was too bewildered and oppressed with the sense of his unworthiness to look around him: he was numb and dumb and blind to all but his great good fortune, and could only follow with trembling fidelity the feet of the angel guide.

He was in Heaven—in Heaven—in Heaven! This was the idea which with the regularity of blood-beats throbbed through his brain. Heaven—the summit of all men's aspirations, the Palace of God, the Kingdom of Christ, the Glory of the victorious souls, the prayer-place of the Saints, the Home of the blessed spirit-world: he was there! His sandalled feet were treading the azure pathway! Before him shone one of the company of angels. Celestial music saluted his ears, although he was yet not qualified to appreciate a tithe of its delights. The fragrance of flowers, a thousandfold more delicious than the scents of the old world, floated round him. But he was too human, and it was too soon after his arrival for him

fully to appreciate the favour and happiness then met.

With hands folded on his breast and tonsured head bent down humbly, Martin followed Broon.

They passed from the marble region of the gateway, with its multitude of joyful spirits, into the green shades and refreshing solitudes of an arboreal and floral paradise. Martin's eyes were aching with the excessive brightness of Heaven's light. He had placed his hands over his brows in order to relieve the strain on his sight; at last he was compelled to call to Broon to stop.

"Rest awhile," said the angel; "in this retreat you can accustom your eyes to the celestial light. You will soon gain relief. Then seize your opportunities for seeing and learning. You must stay here in Heaven some little while, and then will go to a new destination, where a very great privilege and responsibility will be placed upon you."

As he was speaking Broon took Martin by the hand, led him to a recess, and bade him sit on a hillock of velvet turf. The angel then went to an adjacent tree and plucked fruit which Martin soon began to eat, for he was hungry, and the food was good.

A bird with plumage of black and flaming scarlet flew from some neighbouring foliage and perched on the branch of a small tree near Martin. After the lovely creature had rustled and fluttered for a little while it gave forth joyous melody. Martin listened entranced. His mind lost its subjectiveness; the bird was drawing him out of himself and inducing him to realise Heaven's wonders. His eyes gained



strength momentarily : his spirits found stronger confidence. He looked with growing interest at the facts around him. Broon was wandering among the trees, touching the fruit which hung in clusters of gold and purple splendour, making it richer and more beautiful through his influence. Heaven is a region for flowers. In every place where a blossom could with advantage grow, a blossom was growing and glorifying. Many of the over-spreading trees bore on trunks and branches a garment of flaming creepers—orange and scarlet, violet and azure, pink and white—resting on leaves of tenderest freshest green. Grassy hillocks and mounds were topped and crowned with clusters of scented flowers—wherever Martin's eyes wandered, and attracted by the perfect beauty of the scene they grazed all round about, he saw in the right place and in exactly proper proportion and true relation a combination of bright colour—many hued flowers, green grass and foliage, brown tree-trunks—welded and woven into brilliant harmonious union—delighting and attracting, stimulating and teaching. There are no waste places in Heaven. Martin thought it must be the Paradise of the earth's Adam, Eden, translated and made more beautiful. It was immeasurably beyond his sublimest conceptions ; but then it was Heaven. Ah, joyous thoughts ! He, the monk tortured in the old life with the misery of fruitlessness, was of all men the most honoured : he was in Heaven—in Heaven ! with the promise of work to come.

When he had finished his meal, Broon, over whose head and about whose feet and shoulders a sweetly twittering congregation of beautiful birds was fluttering, came to him.

"Are you rested, Martin?"

"I am filled with an energy I never knew before I was dead."

"Dead!" said Broon, smiling. "You are not dead. You are very much alive, and destined, so long as you continue worthy and willing, to do a great deal of material work on a material world, before an angel of death comes from the Creator to take your soul from its tenement. You must have wondered why the seraph Zuron has brought you here in such a miraculous way from the aggregation of atoms which you call Earth. It was his God-given duty to bring you hither. It is my God-given duty to tell you the divine reasons for this transference, and I will do so; but not at this moment: you are not quite ready. The first thing for you to do is to realise clearly that you are in Heaven, and to store up recollections in your mind, so that when the special trials come—and as certain as God's Throne they will come—you may keep the Faith. Upon my shoulders rests a great responsibility. I am to prepare you for that service which, in your unspoken prayers—and no prayers reach Heaven, or Hell, so certainly as the unspoken ones—you have often asked for. I have been selected for this task out of the community of Heaven, because I have had especial knowledge of your earth and its men, and their particular trials and weaknesses."

"You know the world, as one who has lived there?"

"Aye, Martin. I want to know you fully, to be able to help you. For my purpose's sake I will tell you why my knowledge of your world is extensive, and particular, and true."

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Just then a group of joyful children, singing, dancing, and laughing, came running down a slope, chasing one another and picking each other with handfuls of petals and leaves. The birds which had been fluttering about Broon, with one united move flew towards the children, and in a chorus of excited chirping and carols, accompanied the running, rosy miles on their playful way. Broon smiled at the desertion of his feathered companions, and with Martin watched the band of angel-infants, until they disappeared beneath an avenue of pink-blossomed trees.

"I was once an angel of death, one of that company led by Azrael, upon which devolves so many happy and sorrowful tasks. And God decreed that my first mission as bearer of death should be to a distant world to deprive a man's body of his soul. I flew to that world and I found the man. I raised my weapon, but--I hesitated to strike! The man was living in a den of all the corruptions. He was the chief of an evil company. Murtherers, cruelly, bestially debased every half minute. Had I slain him then, I told myself in my immaturity, he must have been damned, for his presence was damnation to his fellows. But my pity for his ignorance and the then hopelessness of his case blunted my purpose. And yet it was God's will that I was presuming to hesitate about. Ah! woe to me! But the influence of my invisible presence struck a chill into the hearts of those people; they broke up their assembly, and went their several ways. But the man who was to die stayed behind. I watched him anxiously. No thought of his personal degradation troubled his

mind; he did not know the least moral fear. I began to doubt if he had a soul to claim. His very absolute animatism urged me to end his wretched life. I touched his heart. He began to die. His face turned pallid and then yellow; his limbs lost their vitality and became rigid. His head drooped, his jaw dropped, his eyes grew glassy, his breath became more difficult, with a groan it ceased. He was dead. Then the terror of his fate, to which he had been so hardened and careless, oppressed me. It was so awful and horrible and hopeless. Did God, who was Love and Mercy, really desire me to carry such a soul to the place of waiting which goes before Heaven or Hell? A renewal of his life might bring repentance before death, which God loves best; it could not make him more evil than he was. My wishes prompted my reasoning. I sprang at a wrong decision. I touched the dead man's heart again. He breathed once more, first with labour, then easily. His eyes became lustreous, his head resumed its bearing, his jaw its firmness, his face regained the colour which pulsing blood gives to it. I had restored the wretched soul. I had taken upon myself a tremendous responsibility. I had not fulfilled God's command. Would He accept my plea? Leaving the man in the chair in which he had died and lived again, I flew back, spurred by anxiety, to Heaven. At the gate I was met by Azrael. I knew then that my disobedience was known and my presumption to be rebuked. I said nothing because what I had to say was known already. I was punished, and my penalty is still being worked out."

"Still? And in Heaven?" asked Martin.

"Yes: there is punishment in Heaven, but no pain. Even angels make mistakes and must do penance. The most general punishment is compulsory silence when the celestial choirs sing. Ah, that is punishment! One of our anthems is begun: the angels join in it; their voices and the music of their instruments swell in mighty unison until the chorus floods the spacious realms of Heaven. It is glorious and stimulating! It inspires. Your lips open, your heart bounds with the passion of music, but you must be silent until the offence committed has been purged away. That is punishment."

"And must you be silent now?"

"No, I may sing now; but my penalty will not have been entirely paid until I regain my place in the company of Azrael, and take once more my stand among those spiritual princes who grace the summit of existence, being in personal attendance on the Throne of the All-Maker."

"But you are in Heaven."

"Aye, indeed, I am in Heaven, and joyous it is in comparison with the state of man on the various worlds he inhabits. I have seen many worlds, including yours, some better, many worse; some rich in material wealth, some very poor; some inhabited by beings who have nearly reached the estate of angels, some peopled by creatures whom the folk of your world would call monsters; all marking various stages in the development of Man. for the making of Man is an almost eternal process. But the best and happiest of these globes is meagre in joyousness and beauty when compared with the

conditions here. The cycle of Heaven in which we now are is the least of the seven degrees which go upward, stage upon stage, each marking a certain increase in spiritual excellence in its occupants, and glory in itself, until at the summit, as the crown of Heaven, is the Throne, where the eternal God eternally rules. That is the absolute summit of all desire, of all sympathy, of all happiness, of all knowledge, of all love."

"And you have been in those higher circles?"

"Yes, in all of them, even to the foot of the Throne. Then I fell; now I am again in Heaven, and hope by doing my duty, to work my way up through the six other gates back to the place I lost."

"And when that is done your punishment will be finished?"

"I believe so; I hope so. But a greater than I decrees that. Let us walk a little-way."

Broon took Martin's hand, and led him through a delightful garden; bushes of thornless roses, more beautiful than any known on earth, waved breast-high. Very soon they were passing through a world of crimson roses. The trees which reared their branches above were tinged with a red reflection. The exquisitely delicious scent of the flowers raised Martin's spirits. He sprang on to a hillock with a cry of delight and gazed around. From that spot Heaven was a vision of floral redness, relieved by gentle green. Birds of all hues and every variety of note darted about, and there was in places a haze of golden-winged insects. Martin mounted the hillock higher.

Beyond the red roses in one direction was a belt

of white roses, in another direction pink roses, and elsewhere roses of other colours; it seemed an ocean of roses; roses were everywhere. Here and there in that Paradise could be seen the forms of angels tending the flowers, and ever could be heard the laughter and carols of perfected childhood.

Soon the region of roses was left behind, and Broon and Martin were in a valley thronged with all the blue flowers which the monk had known in the old days, with many others, new and more beautiful, but not the finest flower in any of the worlds equals in beauty, or grace, or scent, the most modest of the flowers of Heaven.

They continued their way along a green path, between a continuous series of gorgeous scenes. Now a wealth of golden flowers stretched around to beyond eye-reach, and now the floor was carpeted with blossoms of virgin-white. All the flowers were illumined with Heaven's own light, softened by the gentle green of the over-arching trees. Radiant colour followed radiant colour, sweet scent succeeded sweet scent continuously, and without the slightest weariness. There was an aggregation of supreme delights, all the sweets of perfection, without the prospect of monotony. In places the flower-stems waved above the heads of Martin and his guide, and the wind—the wafting of angel-wings—sweeping softly among the stems, breathed harmonics.

Martin sighed with luxurious content. The experience he was encountering was a continual mind-feast. If this bright Paradise were the least of the cycles of Heaven, how splendid must be the second circle, and the third, and the fourth, and the seventh

Heaven, the summit, where angels know the Presence of God!

Broon and his charge emerged from the paradise of triumphant flowers, and saw before them tiers of magnificent rocks down which dashed a number of iridescent waterfalls. Up and down these waterfalls angels were playing. With wings outspread they poised themselves at the top and descended with the straight-falling water. Scores upon scores of sweet children—wingless as yet, were they—watched and applauded, and laughed at the sport with its ever-varying incidents.

At last Broon and Martin arrived at a part which seemed to the man of prompt sympathies more solemn than any other in the happy place. About them were hills, beautiful and flower-blessed, and cradled in the hollows was a strange religious silence. Martin was impressed with the awe of holiness; his heart surged full of the emotion of worship. Broon also walked with head reverently bowed.

"We are nearing your place of preparation," said the angel, in soft low voice. "Before you arrive there I will complete my tale, and I wish you to learn from it this first fact, that absolute obedience is the primal duty. God's word is perfect wisdom. Not to fulfil every detail of His wish is to affect the harmony of the work of Heaven. You are to be an instrument in that work——"

"How?" Martin's rebellious lips whispered.

"You shall know in due season. . . . Azrael, as I told you, met me at the Gate of Heaven, before I could enter it. He gave me one glance, which was the commencement of my punishment, and then flew

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down from Heaven, I following. Silently we sped along the way which Zuron brought you up, and rapidly reached the world which you have come from. Ah, the horror, the pain, the misery of that moment, when my feet first touched the wandering globe, and I knew that the saddest of exiles—from Heaven—was begun. Like God's enemies in the nether sphere I had sinned and lost; but unlike them, I had hope; for me the Gate of Heaven was not shut, and I might hope, when penance was done, even to worship once more in the supreme place."

"Is there no hope for any of the inmates of Hell?—not one little ray?" Martin interposed—pleading with piteous heart for the damned.

"If they will seek for it there is ample hope," Broon answered sadly, "but they scorn the calls which the angels make to them. They curse God and His angels and creatures, and they curse themselves. There is, alas! no hope for them—no hope—they are wilfully helpless; for such as they there can be no hope."

"Alas!" Martin echoed. He would have wept had he not been where tears are impossible, though there unparalleled sympathy abounds.

"Do not be sad," said the angel. "They are your enemies, our enemies, God's enemies. Would that they were not so, but it is their own choice, and all the love of all Heaven seems not enough to change that evil decision."

"Will there never be repentance in Hell and consequent restitution?"

"For that we can only hope. We long for the ultimate union of all beings, the united loyalty of all souls to Heaven. God did not create Hell. Hell

*9. Joseph  
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exists despite God. Only one thing can dissolve Hell—the penitent tears of the inmates of Hell. Until those tears flow, for Helldom there is no hope—no hope.”

Broon was silent for a few moments.

“I was to labour for a lifetime among the sons of men. The world was different then from what it is now. Nature was an ugly tyrant, dishevelled and violent; now she is learning the use of beauty and is very beautiful; the work of the angels is bearing fruit. Animal life in that period of the earth when I was on it was prisoned in a huge morass; where men dwelt was at once a vast jungle and a dreadful swamp. The hot sun-rays filtered through the narrow spaces left by the trees, whose thick black branches interlaced, and, when frequent fierce storms smote them, wrestled furiously, and sometimes broke with loud cracks. Beneath that dark canopy was a region of horrible gloom, containing a lesser forest of stunted trees and coarse undergrowth, choked with rank grass and tangled weeds. Everywhere was decaying matter, animal and vegetable. The stench was almost visible; evil exhalations rose in clouds. Here and there a path through the jungle had been torn by the massive strength and brute presumption of a mammoth or other huge creature, which, more powerful than any obstacle in its path, had forced its way through the choking thicket. Except for these chance passages and occasional lakes of putrid green water, it was all one sea of rank vegetation rising from a soil of mire.

“The heat of that dungeon was stifling, daily it increased and constantly engendered poison. There was a plethora of disagreeable life. Snakes wriggled

through the undergrowth, slid along the branches of the trees, seemed everywhere. From the waters came monsters which devoured the snakes and vermin, and attacked the greater animals. Fierce birds, flew on tireless wings over the undergrowth, seizing their prey, and fighting with each other for nasty dainties. All the animals were beasts of prey. Force was the one law, weakness was always paying the penalty of being wrong. The birds, the beasts, and the monsters of the deep, when they met, fought; when they fought, slew; and the creature slain was hastily devoured. Throughout the day, from the time when the blackness of night became gloom until the gloom was merged into the blackness of night again, there were sounds of brute battle, cries of challenge, roars and screams of wrath, and shrieks of the victims being devoured. Brute life reigned triumphant in an atmosphere of vegetable rankness and decay. Then I saw Man——"

"Man? Adam and Eve?"

"Then I saw Man—male and female. Crooked creatures shambling warily through the swamp, almost upright, assisting their clumsy legs by clinging with their long arms and hands to tree-trunks and other helps. They were partially covered with coarse hair, the male very dark, the female somewhat lighter. They had narrow foreheads, cunning black twinkling eyes, developed powerful jaws, flat broad noses, and mouths which were constantly twitching. They went along, making slow, ungainly progress, always on the look-out for prey or enemy. Suddenly I saw another male of the human kind rush out of the jungle and stand before the

*The first shot  
saw him*

couple. He seemed in a passion. Raising himself upright he swayed monotonously to and fro, waved his arms, worked his jaws, and cried shrilly to the female. Her mate gave a sharp growl of fury and sprang upon the intruder. While they fought the female hobbled away to a dwarfed tree, climbed the trunk, and sat upon a branch which bent low beneath her weight. From that comparative eminence she watched the battle of her lovers and scratched herself. After a conflict of great fury and cruelty, her mate was slowly killed. While his battered body was sinking into the temporary sepulchre of the mire, his rival shambled up and down beneath the tree where the female was perched, and, making constant low crooning cries, looked up at her. With vigorous ungracefulness she slung herself down beside him, and they went on their way together."

"Those were men's earliest parents! Those creatures were Adam and Eve!"

"From that beginning—a 'beginning' the transitory result of years of slow progress—man came. He has progressed slowly but splendidly. Unless on the earth he allows his material self an undue triumph over his spiritual self—and there is dreadful danger of that—he will be ready to rank with the angels before the world has grown cold, and become one of the tenantless, age-decayed spheres which continue their courses round diminishing suns."

There was a pause of eloquent, thoughtful silence.

"Thank God for Mother Church, for the blessing of true religion!" Martin said fervently.

"'Mother Church'!" repeated the angel. "Which branch of the Catholic Church do you mean?"

"Why the Christian—the Holy Roman."

"In the angels' eyes all religions, be their prophets and preachers who they may, are branches of the Catholic Church, provided that in those branches there be an earnest, unselfish desire to realise the true God. In the angels' eyes the least-developed human being honestly worshipping an image is a member of the Catholic Church. He is to be pitied because he is so mistaken in his conception of God, still he has attempted honestly to realise God and do Him homage and service, and so has reason to rejoice. Through that self-forgetting effort he is one of us."

"But the Holy Catholic Church——"

"Is not a sect, Martin. It is the embodiment of all the religions."

"The fanatic who may murder for the sake of his creed?"

"Is not a member of it."

"The heretic?"

"God, not a man, eventually decides what is heresy."

"The selfish man who calls himself a Christian?"

"Is not a member of it. Selfishness is man's worst enemy; it is Satan's most effective trap for souls. The selfish man is the man with the endangered soul. On the growth or the diminution of human selfishness depends whether the men of the earth which knew you will have become perfect before their world is cold and dead."

"Oh that I were on the earth again, to preach, to teach, to set the example!"

"Be content. You have ample work to do."

"But the world?"

"The world from which you came has been blessed beyond all other worlds. Christ, the Son of God, lived on it, worked on it, died on it, rose from it. If men there, despite that Sacrifice, do not live the pure unselfish life—the worse for them! They have known Christ. Christ, Himself, founded the purest of all the Churches there. Consider the multitudinous other worlds which throng the firmament, many of them peopled. In those worlds there is religion, there is Christianity, but no Christ in human form visited them and died there."

"Then how are the people Christians? How could they know Christ?"

"That is the angels' work, that is our privilege. In that labour we live and rejoice. The truth of the Atonement has been clearly told to all the worlds, and is guarded. Pure tradition keeps it alive. Ah, on some of the worlds there is religion, Christianity, as you men call it, far purer than that of the Church in which you served; yet they have not had the opportunities and privileges which your world enjoyed. You are a slow, blind, vain company, you earth-men, with your ceremonies and antics, your mouthings, costumes, and pretence; and a cruel too—how you have made war and caused bloody slaughter in the name of religion! The Catholic Church! Every star which travels in space knows, has known, or will know the Catholic Church. It is limitless. It is eternal! It is God! Heaven is a part of the Catholic Church. Hell knows the Catholic Church—and hates it!"

There was silence for a little time. Martin was thinking deeply. How different everything which he

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had believed in so securely now appeared! The ideas born in his brain took attention captive. He was so absorbed in reflection that although he gazed at flowers of Heaven he did not see them.

"We have talked enough for the present," said the angel. "Meditate deeply and with prayer about these things. Remember, Martin, you have a responsibility to fulfil. Your greatest need then, will be true humility, thorough humility! Come!"

Broon led the way to a kind of cavern. They entered a shaded place. "This is where you will sojourn while in Heaven. You are greatly blessed, more blessed than any of the beings on any of the worlds." He paused, with his hand on Martin's shoulder. "Gaze here, look well, and see reason to be humble."

Martin looked up. There was a rude wooden cross with its four nails, a linen cloth, and the inscription in three languages. "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." It was the true Cross, the identical tree which had shamed and immortalised Calvary. Beside it was lying the crown of thorns.

With a moan of awe and gratitude combined, Martin sank on his knees, put hands together and prayed, until Broon softly touching his head, soothed him with blessed sleep. Martin lay in sound slumber at the foot of the Cross of the Christ. His left hand clasped the base of it.

## CHAPTER V

### MARTIN'S MISSION

FOR a time which cannot be measured—for in Heaven there is no night—Martin received the blessed education of the Cross. With loving fingers he touched, with trembling lips he kissed, the sacred fact. With worshipful heart he pondered over the tale of love it told.

The resting-place of the Cross, where Martin spent his probation, was a recess radiant with roseate light. Its walls were clothed with clinging flowers. Flowers clambered with wanton wealth all about the place, but the Cross was left untouched; that stood in its splendid simplicity, unadorned and alone. Except for occasional visits from Broon, who brought fruit food, Martin was in solitude the whole of that first portion of his stay in Heaven, and Broon never spoke to him then. But the silence was welcome to Martin. His education would not have been complete had it been interrupted even by angel-speech.\* There was, however, no lack of sweet harmony to give him joy. Often, while standing or kneeling before the Cross, he could hear the united anthem of Heaven's multitude—an universe of praise; the glorious chorus added life to his self-revealing prayers. At other times the



lipping chants of little children—newcomers to the estate of joy—reached his heart: play-songs their anthems were; the little ones worship God with their gladness and innocence. Occasionally groups of angels, bearing harps and lutes, would sit on the hills about the recess of the Cross and converse with their music, calling to and answering one another with the voices of their golden strings.

At last the time of seclusion was drawing to a close. The education of the Cross was almost complete. Martin had learnt the necessary lessons of humility and catholic love. Then Broon came to him and was his constant companion.

"And that is the true Cross!" said Martin. "I cannot understand it. Our monastery has as its chief treasure a piece of gilded wood, which we adored and incensed daily; that we held and taught the people was a piece of the true Cross."

Broon smiled kindly. "The monasteries have frequently made mistakes. There is such a weakness as believing too willingly; a fault the religious are especially prone to. There are enough fragments of the 'true Cross' on your earth to furnish a century of saints with crucifixes, while malefactors and pedlars have frequently induced unreasoning believers to purchase rubbish—rubbish sold and then worshipped as relics of the blessed martyrs—soiled fragments of apparel, bones gathered from the ditch—animals' bones. Ah, the irreverence of credulity! Nothing makes sinners so quickly as want of sensible doubt."

"There is no want of doubt on the earth; even in our sacred house there were secret doubters," said Martin sadly.

"To doubt the mysteries honestly, modestly, and kindly, is akin to worship. He who asserts positively that there is no God is ignorant, and a fool, but there are saints among the doubters. Your brethren who doubted did so because some of the things they were expected to believe were more childish than Christian. But follow me."

For the first time since his arrival at the sanctuary of the Cross Martin went into the lighted life of Heaven. Very sweet was the outer place, but not more sweet to him than the hidden recess which contained Christ's Cross. There was something of home there; to be there was happiness; Martin had never, till that time, known home.

They had hardly emerged from the cell when between thirty and forty angels flew on lightning wings from various parts to the Cross. Some were shouting joyfully, some were singing, others striking with passionate hands the harps they held. During Martin's sojourn there they had not been permitted to enter that place of the Cross: now they could go where all Heaven loved to go, and feast their eyes again on the treasure there. They flew in clamorous throng; and a chant rose from the sanctuary.

Out in the brightness, Martin looked around eagerly. His eyes were rested and his sight was strong. The beauties which had dazzled his powers of vision on his arrival in Heaven could now be easily contemplated and enjoyed. The angel and the man reached a green grassy slope which overhung a crystal stream, and Martin, following the suggestion of his mentor, threw himself down among the fragrant grass-blades and brilliant flowers. Looking at his

reflection in the sparkling water, he saw himself changed. The tonsure had disappeared. The once-shaven crown was now covered with soft brown hair, a short curling beard vallanced his face. He was too true a man to notice the growth of spirituality in his expression, but, none the less, the development was there. The influence of residence in Heaven had marked his mind, and was reflected in his eyes.

"Martin," said Broon suddenly, "the time has come for me to tell you the nature of your mission."

Martin hearkened eagerly.

"There is a little moonless globe far away, which has hitherto not known human life. It contains within it every material potentiality in abundance, and spiritual potentiality too, Heaven hopes. It revolves around a lonely sun. For a vast distance—only to be gauged by the period occupied by angel-flight—about that sun and its world, whose human destinies you will largely govern, rests undisputed space. On that globe lies your opportunity; there is your life-work—your mission. You will not for some time yet understand the full import of this charge, but on you is placed a very important and splendid responsibility. The Creator of that world and of all things, having witnessed the slowness with which, after a certain stage, human-kind advances in spiritualness on the worlds which have known them, has in His wisdom decreed that upon this new sphere human life shall begin at a higher standard of development, than has been elsewhere. On your old earth, as on every other peopled star, the human creature has evolved from the lowest form of life. Gradually—alas! too gradually and slowly, in his later progress, for the wishes of the

angels—man has broken from sheer animalism and reached a stage of culture—in a few worlds, as I have seen, he is near the angels—greatly above the brute-life from which he is evolved. He has progressed splendidly, and then he seemed to stop. In all these worlds there is much the same tale: he has reached a certain creditable stage, and then there was hope for men, and the angels hoped. But the higher the advance the slower the progress; beyond that point of proud development advance has seemed impossible; new man-produced hindrances have warped men's minds and destroyed their visions. Social life, which should have advanced man, has, after a while, retarded him; for social life has caused cliques and classes, and been understood by humanity generally to mean selfishness. It has produced and encouraged that meanest meanness—worldliness. Instead of developing angelwards, man has, with exceptions, gone selfwards, that is not upwards. Selfishness is poison to the true life of man. God saw His work hindered by the folly of His little creatures. The worlds have aged, decayed, grown cold, and the men on them at the time of their general death, were far more material than they should have been; so their development is delayed for the shades of the place of waiting. It is God's will that this new world, now in want of its people, shall begin where your old world left off. There lies your responsibility. The Adam and Eve of this world will be more spiritual than any Adam and Eve of history or fable. You are the Adam."

"And the Eve?"

"Wait," answered the angel.

"I have not forgotten my vows!" said Martin

quietly and solemnly. "See the three knots on my girdle—each the token of a consecrated oath: one for obedience, one for poverty, the third one for chastity. Can I break my vows?"

"Forget the monastery!" said Broon with slow severity. "Has the education of the Cross been so incomplete? God's wish is beyond knotted girdles; His will is superior to all the vows of every order. It is your duty now to listen and learn, and not to question."

Martin accepted the angel's rebuke and remained silent, hearkening eagerly.

"The Creator looked among the people of the many worlds for the human pair who most possessed the qualities necessary for the founding of a pure estate. He heard your prayers for work and heeded your cries for an opportunity. He did you the greatest of all honours—He chose you, out of all the men of all the worlds, to be the Adam of a new race. Zuron was despatched to bring you to Heaven for a little season, and you are here."

The angel paused, and Martin, with eyes fixed on a cluster of white lilies which held stately ward by the flowing crystal river, waited with quickening nerves for the continuance of the tale of his mission.

"You are here for the necessary education. Read Heaven and be wise. As you and most men know, all the designs of God are watched and, as far as may be, hindered by the enemy who once was our brightest archangel. Satan and his host of original rebels, with their multitudes of follower-victims who hold the battlements and endure the flaming pains

of Hell, form a power which is ever exercised in antagonism to God. There is no goodness which they do not endeavour to despoil, no virtue which they do not try to pervert into vice. They are our never-resting enemies. Whatever Heaven does, Hell endeavours in some manner to undo. The activity of the Devil is the main cause of the stationary state of man's moral growth. As man developed, we saw, alas! that his weaknesses increased in number and complexity; through those weaknesses the forces of Satan damned many souls. The human being who once permits self to hold ascendance over him is a sadly uncertain creature, blind. He has made himself a weakling. A very little moral energy opportunely applied to the resistance of temptations, which after all are only personal weaknesses blessed and encouraged by devils, would drive tempters disappointed away. But intelligent man is so very finite, and has vision so limited. The gratification of a particular weakness for a few minutes means much after-suffering; but he does not see that, in the early sweet moments of sin. The penalty for weakness must be paid at some time, if not before death, then after death. It must be paid. No sin goes unpunished and unrepented. It may be forgotten by the culprit for a time, but the sinner retains the record of his sin written upon himself, and until he is qualified to enjoy the bliss of Heaven, he must work out his salvation, unwriting the record of every sin in tears and blessed remorse. The desire for Heaven lives among the dead: in Hell the desire for Heaven exists, and its suppression by force of pride is one of the principal agonies of the unfortunate

place; while this desire lives there is hope for the worst and the lowest.

"Now do you begin to realise the purpose of your presence here—your responsibility, your danger, and your strength? God has selected you as the male parent of a new world, and as soon as your habitation is discovered by our enemies—Satan already knows that Zuron brought you here—you will be tempted, and the devils will do their utmost to smirch the purity, and poison the peace of the new human life. You must preserve that peace. You must hold the faith. You must fight to remain pure. You must resist every temptation in whatever way it is administered. All this you can do if you will. Man can be perfect if he will only accept the ideal and devote himself to retaining it. The angels' experience tells them that perfectibility is quite attainable. You will begin your new earth-life with all the advantages which past experience and present Heaven can give. God has dowered you with a grand opportunity. If you succeed it will be a splendid triumph for you and for us; if you fail there will be horrible joy in Hell and continuous misery and moral labour for your sons' sons and daughters' daughters so long as the heat of the sun which warms their world gives them the opportunities of human life."

"It is a very great burden," said Martin slowly.

"It is a very great burden," answered Broom. "Are you afraid of it?"

"No—no! But I shall need the help of Heaven."

"And you will have that help. Whenever doubt oppresses you, pray to God; in every minute of temptation, pray to Him: until Azrael or one of the

death-company—it may be, I hope it is, I—releases the soul from your body—be constant in prayer!”

“If Satan slay me, as the enemy called Kezrel tried to do?”

“The devils cannot put an end to human life, when it exists on any globe. They can only spoil the soul. Death-dealing is the privilege of God’s angels of death. They pilot the spirit into its own world—good or bad. The tempter is the one you must defeat or avoid.”

“How will the tempter try me?”

“That he only knows. The resources of the fiend-world are infinite. The devils are more astute than the angels, their ways are often mysteries to us. But you are not without strength. You will have a companion, and you and she must help one another. The mutual love of man and wife is the best safeguard of faith and purity among men. But, remember, the weakest of saints can vanquish even Satan if he will. Spirituality is the first of all powers, and innocence is stronger than any cleverness.”

There was a pause—a time of silence in which Martin thought and imagined the future. What an opportunity was this! What an almost terrible answer to the prayers he had addressed to the Almighty! He felt that his future was weighted with the anxiety of an awful trust; but he did not shrink from it. The work he had asked for was his—his former prayers were fully answered, but would he know happiness again? Then he wondered vaguely of his future helpmate and companion—his wife. That coming person, no doubt, was a guarantee of happiness; she brought the fulness of love with her. Happiness to him was, however, no necessity or



requirement. Work was what he had asked for in the dead monastic days, the opportunities of unselfish service; and—powers of Heaven!—God had answered his prayer in full measure running over. Martin found a duty facing him, which filled him with deep solemnity, even in that supreme abode of the joys. God, make me worthy! was the recurrent entreaty of his heart and mind. God, make me worthy! O God, make me worthy!

Broon broke the silence once more.

"You will have ample time for meditation. Do not be oppressed by the labour you are honoured with. Be joyful and happy! Humanity has a leading share of the divine love and mercy, and you, Martin, are greatly blest. God's angels are everywhere at their work. In the duties of the day and the slumbers of the night, loving spirits are about you, praying for and helping you, as they are with all men of every colour and kind, and with all the various creatures of the earths, sending sleep to the weary ones, comfort to the friendless, hope to the wretched, peace to those in trouble, aye, woe to the wrongly comfortable, opportunities to the selfish, wakefulness to those who need the ministrations of sleepless hours, true good to all. God's angel army is universal and ever doing His work, in the various ways devised by all-governing, all-loving Omniscience.

"When first I trod the soil of your earth, man, as I told you, was merely an animal; appetite was his only life-object, acts of violence were his first delight. It became my mission to kindle in the savage human breast the spark of spiritual life; to quicken man's slumbrous soul, that being the next stage of his

creation—the first development of his progress from brutality towards angeldom. It was uncheering labour. The soil was very unprofitable, had I not remembered Heaven and known that God was on His Throne—I—though an angel—should have despaired, but I did my duty as well as I could, and it met with reward at last—remember! But life was very horrible at the beginning, man was so utterly brutish. It was all violence and lust. Slaughter and license were the only settled institutions, and to combat them was the first of my labours. What a difference between life there and here; the earth then and the Heaven which for vanity's sake I had forfeited!”

With glowing eyes in which the soft sympathy born of wise experience was shrined, Broon looked at the glorious glades around him. He stooped and touched with gentle fingers a cluster of violet blossoms nestling beside Martin; immediately in response, bright light came from them and scents very sweet. Martin sighed with delight, and enjoyed the new living colour and fragrance. The resources of Heaven he found were infinite, there is no limit to the beautifying influence of the angels. He stored all he saw and heard in his mind and heart.

The solemnity which had so heavily oppressed Martin after he first heard of his mission began to wear away, and confidence took its place, as Broon spoke and gave evidence of the eternal Divine interest in everything that exists, no matter how small and, to the measuring human mind, insignificant it may seem. The knowledge that on his side were the invisible legions of Heaven—a force more truly potent than any that could be gathered from the nether

confines—would ever be a fortress of strength and endeavour.

Once encouraged by this hope, Martin's heart rose higher, and higher still. The splendours of the opportunity appealed to him increasingly as he contemplated its possibilities. The very greatness of the responsibilities—the human destiny of a world—would keep him constant to his trust. What temptation clothed in the most alluring guise could outweigh in influence the need of being faithful to this beautiful ideal. How could there be a second Fall, fortified as he was, and as his wife would be. Aye, the Perfect Life lay before him. The golden keys of the perfect life were being handed to him. He was to be the father of a perfect people, the first parent of a sinless world.

"I must be victorious," said Martin, and the angel murmured so softly that his human companion hardly heard him, "You must."

Then they went homewards—towards the place of the Cross. Martin's heart was glad and buoyant. He was filled with the pride of a great work given to him. The splendour of the future on him depending, was every moment more realised. The Heaven he passed through was full of brightness, but his eyes were dazzled with still greater brightnesses shining before him. These glories at last became so brilliant that he could not see his way. He caught hold of Broon's hand and stumbled along after him. It appeared then as if floating shapes, bright beings of many colours, scarlet-winged, purple-winged, green-winged, silver-clad, moved in a maze before him. It was a kind of aerial dance, an intertwining of

varied colours, a passing in and out of radiant shapes. Martin was dazed by the light, enchanted by the appearances, and at the same time, rapt with the influence of distant song.

Suddenly the sparkling beings seemed to separate and draw backwards—a vision was displayed before him. He was shown the fulfilment of his hope—the perfect future, thanks to him, realised. He looked into the life of the perfect people, the children of his children's children, occupying a land exalted and sinless, enjoying a life uncursed by mean desire and the cruelty of the worldly.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE END OF THE EDUCATION

MARTIN was sleeping on a bank when a bird-song woke him. There was no one by. He rose and wandered where inclination led. Presently he saw an angel flying dejectedly. The splendid being journeyed with the mien and aspect of deep disappointment. Broon at that moment came in sight, walking towards Martin through the flowers, refreshing them with busy hands. He called to the passing angel, who answered in the voice of sorrow. Martin ran to Broon, and asked the reason of the angel's dejection: it was pathetic to see such evident pain in Heaven.

"He is the guardian-angel of a man who was a pillar of goodness on his earth. All Heaven loved and watched that man for the good his character wrought. Now he has surrendered to the enemy. He has deserted his work. The fortress is fallen. Hell has one more temporary triumph. Religion, through that one being's failure, has lost force among the people he led. He has betrayed Christ for the sake of passion. A shining example has lost its brightness. A powerful influence for good is dead. Ah, woe! That is why the guardian-angel flies

dejectedly anywhere: all his devotion and care rejected. Man does sell his glory cheaply sometimes!" Broon pressed his hands together, his face reflected the sorrow that the flying angel bore.

"How wide is the love of Heaven!" cried Martin, pondering. "How infinite may be the sorrow caused by one human sin! I see now why repentance on earth gives so much happiness to Heaven. Why does not God abolish Hell, eternally crush the power of Satan, annihilate Devildom, when one triumph for the enemy spreads sorrow so wide and causes pain even here?"

Q. "Violence is not God's way," Broon answered. "The angels hope for the time when Hell will be no more, when the devil army will have ceased to exist, and Satan's influence will not be contrary to God's; but such a dissolution of evil will not be brought about by force. Hell's walls will melt when Satan and his host repent, and not till then."

Ans. "How very patient God is!"

Broon smiled, and laid his hand softly on Martin's shoulder. "God is—God," he said reverently, and then continued his work of enlivening the flowers.

Martin wandered away alone. Now he could go in that happy country-land wherever he willed. He endeavoured to retrace his steps through the paradise of flowers along the way which Broon had first brought him. As he went his eyes were never idle. They ever fed his heart with food for worship. He rejoiced in the wonders and beauties abounding, and sang the ancient hymns he had learnt in the old life, because he was so happy, and there was about him so vast a wealth of glory to inspire the heart's melody.

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Presently he heard the ring of many voices, much music, young laughter, and pleasant noise. He rested, leaning back in the embrace of some springy foliage—the vigorous offshoots of young tree-life intertwined—and watched a bright procession moving over the brow of a hill. On came, and on passed, a glad throng of celestial beings. Angels playing every kind of sweet instrument, marching eight and ten abreast through the flower-land, under an avenue green and pink and golden; all were brilliant with many-hued effulgence, above them fluttered a canopy of silver-tongued fluting birds. Among the powers, running in happy irresponsibility in and out of the stately ranks, were little children, laughing and shouting gaily, their sweet heads crowned with wreaths while in their hands they waved golden palms and blossomy branches. On they went; after their final ranks, among which were the tiniest children led and carried by angels, Martin followed. He saw that as the procession passed along, the grass, trees and flowers contiguous to it, threw out in sympathy the various burdens of their glories.

At last the realm of perfected Nature merged into a prepared place. Martin was following the happy multitude over a blue and silver pavement through streets bounded by temples and palaces of surpassing grandeur. Angels were hovering over and moving about the streets; as the procession passed they saluted by their names, the happy excited children, who called and threw flowers in return. Ever and again an angel would fly down and bear away one or other of the little ones for a brief, enjoyable ride. There was a world of happiness gained and given in simple ways.

*The deed*

Entranced by all he witnessed, Martin went on, unhindered and seemingly unnoticed by his fellows of that city. He learnt a great deal. He saw that in Heaven, besides happiness, and for the children play, there is work, effort after knowledge, all the arts, and a general desire for excellence and beneficent knowledge. There is competition too, but no envy, because Heaven is the realm of love. There is, however, praise, and a wish for praise, but disappointment—except that kind which guardian-angels sometimes know—is non-existent: it is lost in new endeavour.

All around was activity, games, labour, discussions, teaching, everything worth activity: the buzz of happy business prevailed, animation was everywhere; and yet there was no confusion, nor the shade of oppressiveness, nor the faintest suggestion of strain. The passing to and fro of the spirits was continuous, yet there was no clamour. The brightness and the movement was beyond all else exhilarating. Every fact and every community of facts in Heaven, is supremely harmonious. There is infinite variety but no discord. All the angels have plenty to do.

Suddenly the tocsin of a bell boomed, reverberating, and all Heaven was hushed. Martin gazed wonderingly round: all—archangels to infants—were kneeling, and the hum of united supplication arose. Martin knelt also, and his heart joined in the prayer which his lips were not trained to utter. The angels prayed for the worlds and the living things thereon, and for the penitence of the lost. Then a martial hymn triumphantly rang out. The angels sprang to their feet and marched with the aspect of victors up and about; the children stood by and rhythmically





a golden breastplate and a helmet on which a great green light-giving jewel gleamed. The angel barred the way with a spear.

"You cannot enter this place," said the glorious one.

"What place is this?" faltered Martin, looking yearningly at the beautiful prospect beyond the gates.

"The second Heaven, the circle of Truth."

"Is the Heaven I am now in also dedicated to a virtue?"

"Yes, 'tis the place of the children, Purity."

"And the seventh Heaven is the place of——?"

"Love!"

The whirl of many wings hummed from the heights and grew louder, louder. The sentinel spirit motioned to Martin to stand aside. He obeyed, and then witnessed many angels, whose faces were calm with the expression of responsibility, flying rapidly downwards, each bore in his arms a burden draped and shrouded. Martin watched their fleet descent, until they passed through the entrance gate, and journeyed outwards over the pathways of space.

"Who are they? What are their burdens?" Martin asked eagerly, for the sight of the calm angel-faces had put an awe into his breast.

"Naked in the mantles are souls blessed by God, of bodies about to be born. They are being taken to the worlds where they are to work out their probation."

"Do all souls come from Heaven?"

"Martin, you are an honoured mortal, and are right to seek for the knowledge of truth, but such questions as this come from mere curiosity. The origin and

*Angels  
bodies  
soul.*

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destiny of souls is told to those only who have gone through the long ordeal which alone brings adequate wisdom. These are mighty problems for a man's brain, but mark, there are human bodies born in which no soul exists—the spiritual flame has never been quickened therein. The spiritual life possessed by the ancestors of one of those beings has gradually become deadened by continuous evil generations. So there are beings among the worst worlds of mere clay, the final dregs of parental selfishness and vice. From the dust those sad ones come, to the dust those sad ones go. They are born to unworthy parents, they breathe for an allotted span, they die; the earth, a mother kinder than the father and mother who begot them, takes them into her loving bosom as her own children, sweet flowers are their monuments. The lot of those miscreated ones is, however, better than the lot of their parents, there is a place of shame for the latter. But these are mysteries beyond any wisdom but that of an immortal. The reading of such riddles is the preserve of angels after they have gone through the necessary stages of earthly and heavenly probation, yet man might read a great deal if he were less troubled with his own conceit: there is a great deal of existence very evident to the least angels, which is veiled to man, because man, in an excess of his wisdom, blinds his own eyes. But as he grows worthy, so God gradually lifts the veil, and man learns a little more of himself, and the true physical relationship existing between all the things living on the world he occupies. As the veil is thinned, so the greater facts of universal life, the beauty, the order, the harmony, the laws by God con-

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ceived, which govern and unite the universe are revealed; these things truly learned are the beginning of the revelation of God, to man, despite his cunning, the Mystery of Mysteries—yet to those who know Him, the very Truest, most Prevalent and Obvious Fact in Eternity.

"The shrouded souls," continued the angel, "which you saw borne down this stairway are being taken to one or other of the myriad worlds. They are the salt of human progress, and especially blessed by God. They receive His personal Benediction, and unconsciously enjoy the honour of hearing the Voice of the Creator. Particular talents, beauties, and grace are bestowed upon them, and in their proper places they blossom and do their work. Men say that their possessors have genius: they are the leaders of men, the makers of progress; or, rather, God has given them the power of being such, but the blessed soul is sometimes closed in an indolent or vicious or blinded body, and the fire of genius, which is there, may be a mischief, and not a blessing; still, the blunders of genius are pregnant with meaning to the men who think: no genius is in vain, for God has blessed it."

"And after death are these Heaven-sent souls brought back by angels, as they were taken hence?"

"They go through the process of development all souls experience. But, Martin, be wise; learn the facts which will be of use to you in your new earth-life, and do not ask questions which may well be left till you are riper. Educate your heart; beware of mere curiosity; that is often a trap laid by the evil one. The mysteries, the truths of life, must be

learnt gradually from experience if they are to be learnt at all, and not from mere question and answer quickly given."

"Wisely said!"

It was Broom who spoke. He was advancing up the staircase. Martin turned and looked down at him, feeling somewhat of a convicted truant.

"Are you going through this gateway?" he asked, with the hope at his heart that in such a case he might be Broom's companion.

"No, that is a privilege at present beyond me. I must wait until I am worthy." Broom took Martin's hand, and then with a final word of comradeship to the angel at the portal, who smilingly answered, led him firmly away from the tantalising entrance.

"In Heaven the spiritual progress, begun on the earth, is continued. As man through the generations, by his own worthy effort, rises from the lowest to the highest forms of life, so in Heaven the same principle prevails. Every soul which has passed through the probation of Earth, and, where necessary, Hades, when quite purified and ordained worthy, enters Heaven as a little angel-child, and this—" Broom with wide-spread arms suggested the circle they were in—"is the Paradise of the children. Here they live and develope, and are happy; for a time, which is determined by the capacity of the individual, they strengthen themselves with play; they do little else, but at last the higher faculties call, the need for knowledge and the desire for service are felt. Then the angel's education begins. As with an earth-child, so here—education commences in the

very small beginnings. There are grades of wisdom as there are grades of power. The angels of the sixth Heaven are wiser than the angels of the fifth, and the spirits of the fifth Heaven are wiser, as well as more puissant than the angels of the fourth estate. To gain wisdom and to win goodness, and to be worthy of greater power and extended service are therefore objects eagerly sought after by every one of the celestial commune. Even the archangels and the princes of the seventh Heaven, the most active in the service of their Master, are most energetic in their enquiry after truth. Ah! that is the joy of the highest place—by being very near God to be able to learn and receive the immediate impression of ever-active Omniscience. There the myriad problems of complex existence are made clear. The ways of the Maker are a continual accession of wisdom to the spirits qualified to be by Him. But here we are at the outer gate of Heaven; let us return to your abiding-place—the recess of the Cross.”

“And you, dear Broon, who are so wise, are in the eyes of God as a little child, and must be content to remain in this one realm?”

“Yes; as a child I must remain here, and happy am I to be considered worthy to be in Heaven again! In God’s eyes I am a little child, penitent for the sin of a big folly. Had I been truly wise, I should not have forfeited the very high position I once occupied. The Lord is a good God, and a just and merciful. I will try to be worthy of His mercy.”

Once again Broon and Martin threaded their

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passage through the glorious flower-land, and many beautiful sights and wonders were pointed out to the mortal by the loving attention of the immortal. Martin stored in his memory those many glories; and through the wise guidance of Broon, from the beautiful facts thus gathered, the essence of beneficial knowledge was gradually wrought, and a power realised which was to be a living strength to him in after-days.

Martin's education was proceeding apace. Broon's teaching, the facts of Heaven, the actuality of God and His angels, the obvious dependence of the worlds and man on the divine grace, the universal subordination of matter to spirit, the infallible reign of law throughout the realm of existence, the boundlessness of the dominions of God combined with the close union of all things in those dominions with the all-seeing, all-knowing, all-ruling, all-loving Creator, these gave Martin a wisdom, confidence, and strength, which otherwise could not have been possessed by him. The objects of his journey to Heaven were practically fulfilled, and clothed with the armour of the best knowledge, he would soon return to the work of man—to be the founder of a higher human state—a new Adam endowed with a still nobler trust, perhaps to be faced by subtler temptations than had ever before been directed against human being on earthly sphere.

The end came sooner than he expected. In his place at the foot of the Cross he was sitting, while Broon told him the true story of Christ, as man will know it when he can read the Gospels quite accurately. The angel stopped suddenly.

"The wings of Azrael," he cried—"he is coming hither!"

Broon rose, and taking Martin's hand, led him to the entrance of the recess. They saw a most beautiful presence—a prince of the celestial powers, flying towards them. It was Azrael, the leader of the angels of death. In his hand he bore the sword, sheathed, which is the instrument and emblem of his office. His wide wings—of the colour of orange, though they wore many coming and going gleams of all the colours—sweeping over the garden, caused the myriad grass-blades and flowers to bow their heads in successive waves as he passed over them. His face was stern, but the firm lips and commanding eyes did not kill the wonderful kindness shown in that dazzling countenance. On breast and crest he wore the death-angels' badge—a flaming three-bladed sword crossed by an olive branch. But the light that came from him, the magnificence with which he was robed, the dignity he wore, the awe of his presence were greater than Martin had yet experienced. Azrael excelled Zuron, and Zuron had the excellence of an archangel.

Martin sank on his knees with heart trembling. Broon had already given obeisance.

"Broon, I bring you good news. The probation of this mortal in Heaven is finished. God has witnessed your care, your modesty and wisdom: you have done your work well. If the mortal fails in his mission, it will not be the fault of Broon. The King has decreed that you shall realise the reward of promotion and enter into the next circle of Heaven. I rejoice greatly to bring you these tidings.



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Soon, my brother, you will be again in the ranks I govern. I long for your return to the position you lost. I must go elsewhere now. Lead this mortal back to the outer gate, where Zuron will be found; then meet me. I will conduct you into the second Heaven. Martin," continued the great spirit-prince, whose presence is wrongly feared wherever there is mortal life, as he stooped to place his hand on the man's humble head, "I give you God's blessing. Be worthy of that blessing, and guard yourself that you do not deserve to lose the love of Heaven! My son—my son, the blessing of God be on you!"

In a little while, Martin, whose heart responded to the touch of the hallowed fingers, by a brave sense of determination raised his face. Azrael was gone. Broon was in the recess, kneeling and passionately clasping the Cross. He was praying gratefully, with an angel's fervour. Martin knelt beside him, and with earnest heart repeated the prayer he had uttered in the old chapel when Zuron first found him.

"O God, give me strength that I may do my duty as becomes thy servant. Wherever thy Hand guideth me, may my feet tread without hesitation. In the valleys of fear through which I may pass, give me the grace to look for that brightest of all stars—to remember that most helpful of all hopes—thy love. I am very weak, O God my Father; but with thy aid I can be made strong!"

Broon murmured a sweet "Amen!"

## CHAPTER VII

### MICHAEL AND HIS ANGELS

WHEN the time came for Martin to leave the little home in Heaven, he felt exceedingly sad. He looked round the sweet recess, and touched the various parts of the Cross with fingers which lingered in their caresses. Only the remembrance that his departure was his duty, and Broon's whispered reminder that if all went well ere very long he would be in Heaven again, and then could enjoy the contemplation of the true Cross and other unknown delights for all eternity, salved the sorrow of farewell.

Hand-in-hand, the loving angel and the thoughtful man went along the beautiful way which led to the outer gate. Oh, the sadness, the sweetness, then—as the beauties and joys of the place grew upon Martin—the happiness of that last walk through the glades of Heaven! It was the completion of his education, for it made the mortal long for the attainment, through fitness, of immortality, and the re-entry as a little angel-child to that estate, to live and grow and learn among those eternal glories. It was the living hope of Heaven which made that departure tolerable. Martin gathered further strength

from the store of blessed knowledge which had been so patiently instilled into him by the much-loved Broon.

At last the glorious world of unequalled natural beauty, was left behind—the last flowers had thrown out to Martin their benediction of light and perfume. The last trees which shed on him refreshing drops of scented dew were passed; instead of the cool embrace of the fragrant grass his sandalled feet were treading the crystal pathway: only a choir of birds which overhead had escorted them throughout their journey remained to testify to the existence of that loving world of peace and beauty.

When Broon and Martin reached the streets, it seemed as if the whole community of Heaven had gathered there, so very numerous was the multitude through which Broon piloted his charge. A narrow way was made for Martin to walk along; its boundaries were kept by children, sitting, standing, lying down, who sang and tossed flowers to the honoured mortal passing by. Behind the children was a dazzling concourse of angels—standing, flying, chanting, playing instruments, making most sweet harmonies. It was a scene of living magnificence, and impressed a lasting brightness on Martin's memory—the happy faces of the children, their garlands and costumes of all the colours, the continuous fall of flowers, the deep blue of the pavement: then, behind the little ones, the angels flashing with gold and glory, and about all, Heaven's radiance!

At last they reached the outer gate where Zuron with the winged chariot was waiting. The time for

farewell had come. Martin felt a pressure at his throat, and his heart was very heavy, as he stood to say good-bye. Broon kissed his lips and whispered: "Be brave; be true." Zuron then helped Martin to mount the chariot, which was partly laden with flowers and fruit from the trees of Heaven and decorated with branches.

A burst of music rang out; it came from the united lips of the celestial beings, like a parting salute to a hero. Then once more Martin heard the boom of the signal bell, and there was hush. Again the swell of wide unanimous prayer arose: Martin's heart truly told him that at that moment he and his mission were the subjects of the prayers -- the prayers of all Heaven! A hymn followed: it was that which Zuron had sung after his victory over Kezrel. Was it the presage of Martin's future triumph? In the middle of the music Zuron gave a word; a band of angels armed with spears and bearing sparkling yellow shields dashed on rapid wings through the outer portal; the chariot moved: Martin's journey to the place of his life-work was begun. As he was passing through the gateway, seized with the yearning of farewell, he looked back at Heaven, with its brilliant melodious multitude gazing after him with blessings in their eyes. Beyond the children and angels he saw the white stairway which led upwards unto the highest place, and there, on the lower steps, by the side of Azrael was Broon, his hand in benediction raised, ere he went to the second Heaven. Martin saw with joy that Broon, like the other angels, was now endowed with wings.

"Sleep, Martin," said Zuron softly. Martin, obedient, slept and dreamed of Heaven and the

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celestial people. Many of the angels issued from the gateway to watch the chariot with its unique occupant speeding into the distance.

After a while, Martin awoke, and with one passing pang, because his visions were visions only, found himself embarked again on the ocean of space. Now as before Zuron flew silently beside him, but this time Zuron was not alone, for Martin saw, spread out like points of a vast invisible fan, fifteen angelic scouts.

Behind the chariot, at a moderate distance, was a rear-guard of five. The angels were armed with spears. Martin noticed that all of them, although less in degree than Zuron, and by no means equal to him in brightness, had wings and armour of the same colour as those of the archangel. They were warriors of his legion.

For a long while Martin travelled. Zuron and his bodyguard continued tirelessly on the wing; their flight was swift and their watch was careful. They were far removed from the sphere of consecrated influence which surrounds Heaven, travelling through an avenue of distant stars—two white clouds of far light, suns, the centres of myriads of worlds, most of them bearing multitudes of people. Martin took to his heart the lesson of humility which this display of immensity taught. In this manner they journeyed: Zuron silent, except when the company of angels raised a united song; Martin mentally at work reviewing the past, and organising canons of action for the future.

One of the angel-scouts suddenly raised a cry, and pointed with his spear in a direction far to the right. Zuron darted forward, gazing intently. Martin looked

also ; but, as had been the case at the appearance of Kezrel, could see nothing—except grey space and distant stars. Then Zuron sang out, and in immediate response the fifteen scouts drew together and waited on extended wings until the chariot came up to them. Four of the rear-guard also flew up to the side of Zuron—the fifth of the angels following had instantly turned, and was cleaving his way with fierce wings back to Heaven. The heavenly comrades continued their journey, but now towards the left of the direction they had hitherto pursued. Martin stood in the chariot, anxious to see all that was to happen, and gradually was aware of a lurid canopy growing in the distance. He felt that that canopy—pall were the better word, for it shrouded a world of dead virtue—was the accompaniment of a vast army of the enemies. His heart sank as he noted the smallness in numbers of Zuron's band. Could they hold their own against the evil host threatening them and him?

His human fears honourably disappeared when he saw the calm determination on the angels' faces. With Zuron in the centre by the chariot the nineteen warriors extended to fighting distance and kept their spears ready to strike. There was no evidence of dismay or fear in their shining countenances ; but the fire of hate—for Hell, the powers of Hell, and all the designs of Hell—flashed from their eyes. Martin saw with joy that these were brave hearts—as all God's warriors are bound to be.

His confidence was, however, lessened, though not destroyed, when he looked again at the advancing enemy. They were still so distant that no individuals in the multitude could be distinguished, but their

overwhelming numbers were becoming more apparent every moment. In one vast dark red cloud the swift legions of the enemy spread to right and rear and left of them, until they threatened entirely to envelop the band of angels. Zuron, when first he saw the greatly preponderating might and numbers of the enemy, had directed the chariot towards the only part of space which was not then troubled with fiends; but the angels could only fly at the lower speed of the chariot, and every moment Martin saw the gap of liberty lessened. Unless relief from Heaven came the angels must be surrounded and overwhelmed—how could they escape from, or baffle or defeat, that stupendous army of evil?—and when they were overwhelmed, what then? His lips moved in prayer: the angels were praying too. Still the host of devils gained on them. The little gap of grey space was becoming narrow—very narrow; with a groan Martin saw it closed. They were surrounded by Helldom. He was enclosed in an awful tomb; his only hope was speedy relief from Heaven, and the strong arms and brave hearts of Zuron and his heroes; but that solitary hope was adequate. Was not God in Heaven? The divine Omniscience knew of his distress, and God's strength was not lessened by distance. Against Him, what was the might of Satan? Nevertheless, Martin, at that moment of stress, remembered one uncomfoting truth that Broon had told him: "The devils cannot put an end to human life when—it exists on any globe." Had they then the power of dealing death to him now, when he was in mid-space, and the nearest world was millions of miles away? The idea was worse than

depressing, but he roused his heart with the knowledge that God had chosen him for a special work and would not have His designs frustrated in such a way by such an influence at such a time. "So, up heart!" cried Martin.

The little celestial forlorn-hope was quite surrounded, above and below the chariot fiends were clustering, so close now that every individual in the front ranks of that lurid host could be discerned, every malignant glance, every cruel scowl, every scornful smile, every hideous leer, every glittering weapon, every grotesque shape, every minute detail of the imprisoning army, realised and noted. Martin gazed fascinated and horror-stricken.

In regular order the legions waited, every legion having at its head a leader of especial power and fierceness—a prince of Hell. To be where Martin was, was to know something of the evil place. The stench of Hell, which, with their torturing attendant flames, the devils never can escape from, rolled forth in blistering clouds. Martin seized a garland of Heaven's flowers, which was lying on the fruit in the chariot, and breathed its fragrance with relief. For a time there was no sound except the continuous flapping of the evil-ribbed wings, like multitudinous, separate, sharp thunder-claps, and there was no act of war. The hateful host merely surrounded and enclosed the angels and their ward—in a vast, armed, fiery, living envelope; but the voicelessness of that army, and the threat of their attack with its impending, unknown horrors, unnerved Martin, who sank to the floor of the car for a few moments, cowed. The angels, estimating the tactics of the enemy,



had gradually drawn round the chariot, every one keeping determined ward. Hovering, they revolved slowly, every weapon ready. Martin, looking up and round him, found he was the centre of two living globes, one of virtue, golden,—angels and Heaven; the other, massive, red, and evil,—devils and Hell.

The silence was broken as if by one tremendous voice: the devils with absolute simultaneousness called out in salute the name of their chief: "Satan, our King!" The challenge the words implied pealed through the vastness.

A prince—*the* prince who at one perfect period had been second to God alone—had flown through the parted ranks of the warriors of Hell, and rested on extended wings before Zuron. Martin felt that it might be death to meet the awful glance of that first of rebels, but in his passion to see Satan, he ventured to peep at him between the angels. Ah, the pride and sorrow, the majesty and misery, the fierceness and woe, the determination and despair of that face! Among all countenances there is none to equal it. It is the face of the leader of evil, the active instigator of universal sin, the prime cause of sorrow; it wears the magnificence of the best archangel blotted.

"Who is the leader of this band?" Satan asked, in a voice of thunder, whose echoes rang through the glistening ranks around him.

Zuron answered nothing. His face was impassive as that of a silver statue. There was a proud confidence in his eyes.

"Why am I not answered?" said the Prince of Sorrow bitterly. Then addressing Zuron directly, he

cried, sharply and angrily: "Insolent angel! Ignore my questions at your peril! Look at the hosts around you and be wise! Why is this monk here? Why has he been to Heaven? What is his destination now? What is God's purpose with him? Tell me at once, or perish by the might of Hell!"

Quietly Zuron answered: "I have not God's permission to tell you anything."

Cries of anger and then a chorus of laughter rose from the opponents' ranks. Satan spoke again:

"Does God allow His angels so little liberty? Angel, be wise. Here at this moment I am more powerful than God."

"No!" sprang from the lips of the fearless Zuron.

"Curb your tongue, the archangels of to-day are evidently not wise. Here at this moment I am all-powerful. Hell is here, armed, and ready to destroy you, and to dare and do anything at my word. But I am not anxious to injure you or any of Heaven's angels: I will wait for that until next I assault Heaven——"

Satan was interrupted: loud applause from his followers emphasised these bold words. Zuron remained proudly impassive: the angels were not to be turned from their purpose by all the oratory of the nether-region.

"You are a little band—a brave little band—quite alone, and really impotent. Consider! What is your power? That of a vaporous bubble, floating into a universe of flame." Across the face of the dark angel as he spoke these words passed the expression of sharp agony; his boasting was answered by this evidence of his own impotence and suffering: all the vaunted

power of Hell could not keep the torture of the flames from his heart and body and limbs, and those of his servitors. The devils are always torturing themselves with remembrance of their agony. "Angels, I have no wish to touch you. Hell admires the brave, and more admires the wise. Grant my little request, and you will be both brave and wise. Go your way—back to Heaven, or leave God's inglorious service and join us. You shall all be princes, and have greater power and liberty than you will ever enjoy in the gilded prison of your God. Or if you do not care to join us, go your ways, and in some distant part of the universe found a Kingdom—a Heaven or a Hell, call it what you will—of your own. Rule there, and make creatures, build worlds, produce joy or misery as you like; people space with monsters or beings of superior beauty: do entirely as you will. I will not interfere with you nor hurt you in any wise; aye, all these hosts, the united might and influence of Hell, shall be exercised to protect you and keep you safely from the wrath and spite of Heaven. This honour and opportunity shall be fully yours: all I ask for in return is this monk."

Satan paused for an answer. Zuron answered nothing.

"Give me this man, I say. Not to do as I demand is to direct my vengeance on yourselves as well as on him. He is quite at my mercy. I could slay him with a hiss; but I have other purposes for him: I do not wish to slay him—yet. For the last time I say it: give him into my hands and go your ways, wherever you will."

"Satan, it is impossible."

"Mischief be on your own head, then! Give up the man to force, if reason does not reach you!"

Satan advanced. Red fury darted from his eyes. His great wings beating the ethereal air gave forth clouds of poison. But Zuron fearlessly opposed his passage.

"Back, Satan! Remember, God is on our side."

"Here, my might is greater than God's. This will be the day of the victory of Hell!"

Again a great cry rang from the lurid army, again the vault of space trembled with its reverberations. "Satan, our King! Satan, our King! The day of Hell and Victory!" The devils supported their cries with a blinding volley of red artillery. From all sides round the little group of celestial comrades a deluge of javelins of forked flame was thrown at them. Ceaselessly the nearest ranks of the enemy hurled their darts of angry lightning, principally at Zuron and Martin. But the angels in their turn were not idle. Four of them had sprung into the chariot, and, with their shields, effectually protected Martin from the awful hail, while the remainder plied their lances and flung white lightning in return, causing devastation in the opposing ranks which more than repaid the pain which the angels were enduring. Zuron was boldly grappling with Satan himself.

Presently a shriek arose from one of the distant fiends. The angels read its meaning more quickly than the devils. Relief was on the way. The host of Heaven was on the move, bringing succour and triumph in its train. Zuron began a chant; his comrades caught the melody and joined in the burthen of it. With renewed strength they plied their spears

and hurled their lightning. In the frenzy of fury, Satan broke Zuron's wings and threw him back into the chariot. Then he leapt down to seize Martin, who was lost in a blessed swoon, and to bear him perforce away. But three of the angels protecting Martin grappled with Satan, and Zuron, despite his pain and momentary helplessness, seized and troubled the feet of the leader of Hell. Meanwhile the devils in broken order had dashed down and closely enclosed the small globe of virtue. It was the moment to force victory or entirely to fail. There was a period of tumultuous battle. Friends and foes grappled blindly, furiously. The power of Helldom was concentrated to crush that bubble of light; but the united power of Helldom happily failed. New flashes of lightning penetrated the ranks of the evil ones. The legions of Heaven had arrived, and surely and pitilessly their weapons pierced the intended marks. A groan of fear, despair, wrath spread through Satan's ranks. There was a loosening of the strife: the devil-army fell heavily backwards. It was the moment which makes or mars a fight. Satan knew the destiny of the battle was trembling: he realised with the instinct of leadership that his warriors were wavering. He hurled aside the angels who were wrestling with him, and called to his followers to remain firm. He flew on passionate wings through the confused legions, rallying his soldiers, compelling order, inspiring them to fight. It was to be the day of Hell's triumph! The devils caught up the words; their leaders raised Hell's proudest anthem. The dark legions gained confidence from the angry daring melody. They dressed their ranks and soon were

massed in fighting order : the tendency to retreat was stayed.

Opposed to them was the army of Heaven. Zuron, seeing Martin in his swoon, kissed him into consciousness that he might rest his tortured self by contemplating the beautiful sight of the ordered celestial host, as the chariot with its heroic guard, relieved of all oppressors and only followed by a desultory ineffectual fire from the enemy, slowly fanned its way to safety. Martin stood up entranced. All the recent agony was lost in the joy of witnessing so much puissance and splendour.

In one long line of golden light the army of Heaven advanced. In the very front, each at the head of one of the seven great divisions of the army, flew the seven princes of the archangels—Gabriel, Azrael, Uzziel—Michael, the leader of all, in the centre—Abdiel, Uriel, and Raphael. Then came a glittering line of archangels, each the leader of his legion, lastly the legions themselves—an organised combination of unconquerable might, the Ever-victorious Army, the faithful, virtuous warriors of God.

Each of the seven great divisions of Heaven's host was distinguished by a particular colour. Gabriel, the leader of the division at the extreme left, wore beneath his armour of light-giving gold a garment of red ; his wings were of the same grand colour. His archangels and their legions bore shields and wore armour, similar in hue, but somewhat less splendid. They comprised the red division of the army. Then came Azrael, the chief of God's angels of death—his colour was orange. Uzziel was the third of the princes ; he and his followers were garbed in livery of yellow—

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softened gold. Michael, the leader, had wings and armour of green; every tint of that comfortable hue was expressed in the serried ranks behind him. Abdiel's colour was blue. Uriel's legion wore armour indigo in hue. Lastly, on the extreme right, was Raphael; his colour was violet—regal violet and purple, as befitted so famous a prince.

It was indeed a beautiful and inspiring spectacle. Martin's eyes ranged over the celestial host from extreme left to extreme right, enjoying an oratorio of colour and brightness. The legions were so arranged that there was no hurtful contrast of colours. Every hue was represented by innumerable tints, every distinct colour was gradually merged into the colours next to it. Martin gave a sigh of complete appreciation, while the eyes of wounded Zuron were very proud.

The line of the virtues advanced, and soon Martin was piloted to safety. Immediately the chariot had attained sanctuary, Michael raised his sword; a ringing battle-cry went up from the angels: there was a rapid general advance. Zuron, who was still with Martin—the nineteen angels, although more or less crippled in condition, had taken their places in their legion—caused the chariot to ascend, and from an eminence they watched the battle.

The two armies, raising continuous cries of challenge, flew towards one another. As they went there was a constant interchange of mischief-dealing darts of lightning, and the rattle of the discharges—each a thunder-clap—combined with the rallying calls of the combatants, rolled onward through the avenue of worlds in terrible medley. But Martin

did not heed the noise, his attention was entirely captivated by the all-important conflict underneath. Zuron at his side was also a sight-seer, but not a willing one; he rustled his broken plumes and sighed because the slowness of their healing—rapid though that was in comparison with the progress of human cures—forced him to be absent from the head of his legion.

The two great hosts in the aerial battle-ground beneath were now very near one another. The rattle of the lightning cannonade lessened somewhat as on both sides the leading combatants couched their spears—a long glittering line of flaming points—preparatory to a charge and subsequent close conflict.

Then the occupants of the chariot saw the ranks of the enemy open, and Satan—the prince of all that is merciless and malignant—flew out, laughing with fierce notes of scorn, as he pointed to his standard, which a dark angel bore behind him. Every being in the army of God gave utterance to a shout of wrath at this pre-eminent insult; Zuron groaned anew at his personal impotence, for the battle-standard of the devil-army was a large crucifix bearing the painted figure of Christ. With laughter, echoing that of their chief, the evil ones blasphemed, and, gaining courage from their own bold words, prepared to hurl themselves solidly forward on the line of spears, while their standard-bearer flew swiftly up and down in front of the foremost legions, waving his trophy, crying out in mocking tones, "God's Son slain by men!" stimulating the devils to the daring of madness.



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The progress of this insolent spirit was, however, suddenly checked, for one of the archangels, stung to rashness by the brazen insult, dashed out from his place, passed Satan, and endeavoured strenuously to wrest the crucifix from the hands of its bearer, who backed into the ranks of his comrades. Immediately the celestial hero was surrounded and fiercely assailed; but still he clung to the standard. At all costs, that must not remain an emblem of triumph to Hell and a deadly insult to God! At any cost, that must not be!

The battle was now general. Along the whole line it raged, each party endeavouring to outflank the other, the lines continually lengthening as the warriors in the rear-ranks of the legions joined the issue. Michael and Satan were fighting together; a wide circle of space was left free around them, and each, although well occupied with personal considerations—for the victory of the leader often meant all the victory—shouted battle-cries occasionally to inspire his followers. Previously the separate armies could be distinctly descried by Martin—one a broad band of light, the other an equal band of ruddy flame; now the warriors in the front of each had become interspersed, as the hand-to-hand conflict continued, and shrill shrieks of horror and pain pierced the general roar, as the determined angels wielded and urged their awful weapons. At first in individuals, then in groups, then by battalions, the incapacitated devils fell trembling and fluttering into the boundless abyss, like fiery raindrops falling desultorily. Here and there wounded angels fluttered too, but they did not fall—Hell had no power to attract them—and

were not untended, for ministering comrades, the sweetest ones of Heaven, who wore a red cross on their breasts, and were attached to every legion, gave them comfort and the relief which precedes restoration.

The battle raged with increasing intensity, for, as the angels began decidedly to triumph, the hate and desperation—desperation nigh unto frenzy—of the fiends increased, and they fought as they had never fought before, not even on that occasion of all occasions when at the great rebellion, before the ultimate overthrow, they made a final rallying bid for victory—for Heaven—for universal power and government; all of which was utterly unavailing. Satan then had boldly tried for a crown of gold: he had received instead the dust of bitterness; he had risked Heaven to gain Heaven, but forfeited Heaven only to find Hell. Now once again in desperate strife he had occasioned a conflict against the warriors of God; it was the greatest united effort Hell had made since the foundations of his Kingdom had been laid, and all this had arisen from an effort to gain the body of a wretched monk, whom God for some reason had honoured extraordinarily. Satan fought as a desperate Satan would fight, and his archangels and followers—whose only virtue, really a vice, is absolute fidelity to their chief—were worthy soldiers of Satan. All the ingenuity and power of Hell was directed against Michael and his angels, but from the beginning the ultimate issue was assured, for, from the first contact of the antagonists, the prowess and the cause of Heaven had proved the stronger.

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Only the result of the duel between the two arch-princes, Michael and Satan, remained to determine the result of the whole momentous battle. Twice Michael had hurled Satan back, for the moment worsted into the ranks of his adherents: twice also Michael had been thrown down and trampled by Satan; but they had the energy of the greatest angels, and were filled with the consciousness of the necessity for their cause of personal victory. Consequently they smote and grappled with supreme fury. The angels fighting by them—for they were the centre of that flaming battle-field throughout—encouraged them with cries and fragments of martial songs. For the fifth time, with iron determination expressed in the lines of their faces and the scorn of hate flashing from their eyes, they were advancing to continue their conflict, when God's angels gave a great shout, signifying entire victory in some part. Both Michael and Satan paused, and with anxious countenances looked for the cause of the sounds of triumph. A cry of joy sprang from Michael's lips, and the angels began to sing—omen of ill to the hopes of Satan and the destinies of that day!—the old song of triumph which had echoed through space and had haunted Satan and his vanquished dupes during their punishment. It was the song once more—Martin knew it well—which he had first heard Zuron sing after the encounter with Kezrel. Zuron was singing it once more, for he and Martin saw the reason for gladness. The archangel who had rushed into and been lost within the evil ranks in his effort to possess the insolent standard of the enemies had at last emerged, beaten

and torn almost to impotence, but splendidly triumphant. Throughout the encounter, despite every pain and taunt, he had clung to the crucifix. Although his wings were broken and useless he had still battled to hold it, and not for the tithe of an instant had his fingers relaxed their grip. At last his efforts prevailed, and although very sorely wounded, he had fallen from the circle of strenuous foes victorious. As he was fluttering down, loving hands caught him, and gently supported by red-cross angels he appeared at the front, bearing the crucifix, once the devil's standard, now an honoured trophy—the symbol of celestial victory, the immediate cause of the rout of the evil ones, the banner of the army of God.

“Well done, well done, my Dorian!” was Michael's glad salute. That was the sign of the downfall of Satan.

Unnerved by this incident—for it had been the display of this crucifix which had particularly urged the devils to the conflict—the followers of Satan began to lose order and take indiscriminate flight, which soon developed into panic. Individually, then in groups, then by battalions, those who still were fighting threw away their weapons and strove passionately to escape. Satan realised, with a groan, that the day was lost, the last hope which his heart held faded and died. He turned suddenly and fled also—every one of his army had already gone. Once again he knew the bitter taste of defeat. Hell would henceforth be ten-thousandfold worse to all its occupants, because of the utter disappointment of this second supreme effort. Woe! woe! woe!

As the fell angel fled he beat his breast with rage, and groaned, and cursed his comrades.

That day of disaster was, however, not yet done. The last bolt had been hurled from the armoury of Hell; now the evil ones had to endure, without possessing the power to resist or retaliate, the punishing pursuit of the victors. An appointed part of the legions of God followed the falling devils to mete out the merited woe. Awful punishment was necessary to prevent the recurrence of such an effort on the part of Satan and his victims. The battle had been their beginning: they sowed the fiery seed; the losers must endure its fruit. Downwards the scattered legions fell, crushed and routed, pierced again and again by those flashes of flame which were most terrible to them. Groans, shrieks, and unintended blasphemy rose from the stricken ones. Curses on their leaders were especially loud and bitter. They did as all dupes do in the hour of awakening and remorse. Hell had been Heaven to those baffled ones, in comparison with this new state of agony, and despair, and lost faith in their vanquished leaders.

At last the violence was ended; every devil, no matter where he had flown to for refuge, had been driven by fire and sword back to his prison-place. The defeat was complete. Satan, in the loneliness in which the new distrust of all his followers temporarily placed him, strove to salve his great agony, and to stay Hell's despair, by building new designs against the creative intents of God. He did not forget Martin.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE NEW GENESIS

AFTER the storm of strife came beautiful peace.

No sooner had the last devil, with his following of avenging angels, disappeared into the distance underneath, than Martin realised how awful the thunder and strain of the conflict had been. The difference from that state, now experienced, was quite divine. He expressed to Zuron in one eloquent look the relief of body and soul.

"Aye, brother," said Zuron earnestly to him, "war is terrible. It is the devil's favourite game; there never was battle on any world, nor in the spiritual spheres, which had not Satan for its secret or open originator; but as long as the lost angels, and, on the worlds, the ambitious men, try to achieve their wishes by means of force, just so long will it be necessary for the virtuous to keep their weapons true and ready. War is a favourite work of the devil: but still more potently is an unvirtuous peace, aye, and the wilful unreadiness for war of the righteous and the just, the work of the evil one. Peace is very good: but the sluggard is no true peacemaker! Some day there will be perfect peace, but then there will be no devils. Meanwhile, brother,

take care 'on your world that there is no war; that is, keep sinless: never let Satan overcome you. But who comes here?"

An angel, with livery and wings of green—one of Michael's division—was speeding up towards the chariot. On arriving he raised his spear, until his hand was level with his helmet, in salute to Zuron.

"You bring news?" asked the archangel.

"Yes, from Michael. He has commanded me to conduct the mortal to his habitation. I have all the instructions. Until your wings have regained their strength, you are to return to Heaven."

"But the bodyguard? Do you go alone?"

"Yes, Zuron. The enemy are quite defeated. Michael is sure that they will not venture out of their fastness for some time yet. They have to restore their confidence first. Our angels," he added with a smile, "have shattered that; then they do not know on which of the worlds this mortal is to be. Also, the legion of Orrin has been detached for special service on or about the world; there is consequently no danger from Satan to fear during this journey."

"Good! Farewell, Martin, for a little time, and a fair journey! We shall meet soon. Farewell, Triest!"

It was first necessary for Triest to assist Zuron to travel to the gathering warriors below, and although two red-cross angels flew towards them to relieve Triest of his duty, the time thus occupied enabled Martin to see more of the interesting movements of the great army. None of the angel-host had gone back to Heaven: those who had not joined in the pursuit were waiting for the return of all their

comrades before the triumphant flight homewards began. Meanwhile, the ministering angels assisted the wounded ones to regain their capacities sufficiently for them to take their places in the victorious ranks, an honour every one of them was particularly anxious to realise. Zuron managed to take his post at the front of his legion, and in the prime place of honour immediately behind Michael was the archangel with the crucifix. He was assisted in the journey homewards by a little group of red-cross angels. It was a glorious experience for Martin—the gathering of the celestial company after the perils and labour they had gone through; the brilliance and the colour being the more vivid because of the great gladness which animated every individual in that host.

In orderly succession the triumphant pursuers returned from the deeps; legion followed legion in long glowing lines, every one in their ranks singing as he waved his spear or smote on his shield with lance or sword. Martin, peering into the funereal depths, could see the glittering squadrons ascending from very far beneath, and with eyes which lingered in appreciation, he noted the proud and regular way in which every individual in the legion, and every legion in the army, kept his and its proper appointed place. Organisation and order, as well as omnipresent beauty, are principal facts of Heaven. This truth Broon had taught him; but his mentor had not shown him so eloquent a manifestation of the truth as he was now viewing in the serried ranks beneath. Triest had long since returned to the chariot, but Martin begged that he might witness



the departure of the victorious army; and the angel, already possessed of Michael's permission in such a case, readily consented. He had not long to wait. The last legions had returned to their proper places; each archangel had reported his presence and preparedness to his prince, and each of the six princes, when his group of legions was ready, had taken his report to Michael, until every angel in the host was known by the prime leader to be in his proper place. Then Michael raised his voice, and like the blast of a silver trumpet his command rang out. There was immediately a wide waving of multitudinous wings, an increased spread of golden light as the wings expanded, a general retraction as they shut, together with a vivid united beaming of bright colours, then in thunderous chorus a new song of triumph pealed out. With breathless interest Martin watched the sparkling host of brave and holy ones proceeding victoriously homewards. They had all battled for him! That was the thought which animated his mind, caused grateful tears to moisten his eyes, and nerved his determination thoroughly to do his duty.

One legion, however, had not gone with the army. It was that led by Orrin which Triest had spoken of; it flew silently in the opposite direction. Martin watched the Heaven-going army until it appeared as a mere quivering line of light in the distance, then he turned towards his duties, and found that the winged chariot and the attendant angel were already wending their way towards his new earth home.

The journey continued its course; the monotony which in some circumstances might have attended it

did not exist, owing to the converse of the angel, and the busy mental occupation of the hopeful man. Again and again Martin examined the points of his moral armour, and planned as well as he could do the course of action which would best govern the beginning of the development of a perfect world.

At last Triest pointed with his spear before them.

"There is your sun," he said with a smile.

Martin sprang to his feet and gazed eagerly. In a few moments he could distinguish a tiny quivering star of faint white light.

"It is very small," he said.

Triest laughed as he answered: "It is very far away."

After a while Martin asked: "Where is the world?"

"Be patient. That you will see presently."

They continued steadily to travel. The sun grew gradually larger and brighter. Martin soon saw that it was no mean luminary, but a body which compared not unfavourably with the far-off orb, which at that very moment might be pouring its generous influence into the old monastery garden, giving life to the flowers and gladness to the hearts of the brethren. How many earthly days or years, Martin wondered, had elapsed since he gathered comfort from the flowers, and from the brethren received—a scourge? Suddenly, after fancy had repeatedly deceived his too willing eyes, the world, Martin's new earth, came into sight—a small black spot speckling the face of the sun.

"Is that the only planet circling round that sun?" asked Martin.

"Yes."

"What a waste of heat and energy! That little world cannot receive the millionth part of the light and warmth given out from that sun."

"Nothing in existence is wasted," the angel answered quietly; "nothing that God has caused is finally lost."

The hopeful Adam of the approaching earth gazed at it, fascinated by the proud consciousness of its possession. He was the human owner of that globule of matter! That was his kingdom, his earthly shrine, the place of his delayed home, the sepulchre of his mortal frame. Swiftly and certainly the apparent size of the sun increased: its light became brighter, its generous heat more felt. Rapidly also, more rapidly than he knew, the world appeared to grow in bulk, until, as the chariot neared it, it hid the sun from sight; and Martin felt again the chill of night, a sensation he had not known since his early passage with Zuron from the monastery to the moon. Every moment the world appeared greater and greater, until it loomed vastly before him. It possessed no moon; what other stars were within visual distance were mere specks congregated into an apparent cloud. Their light was far too weak to be reflected on the earth. The night was almost totally dark. Martin was able to distinguish nothing on the world; he could hardly have received a more chilling welcome to the abode of his human destiny. But Triest's presence gave him light and comfort until the chariot reached the world. Then Martin descended and touched earth again. What had not long before appeared a distant speck was now beneath his feet,

a vast, revolving mass of earth and water and interior flame, enclosed in an atmospheric envelope, and he was but a living speck upon that speck.

Triest, immediately after their arrival, in fulfilment of orders, had to fly away to report the accomplishment of the journey, and to take the chariot to the archangel Orrin, leaving Martin to wait through the night, and long for the sun to rise and show him the nature of the place. Those were cold, silent, and cheerless, but eloquent hours, which he spent alone. His ears were out of tune with the sounds of earthly natural life, and he knew the awe of utter loneliness and absolute silence.

At last, dawn grew in the east, the glorious sun arose, and with the sunrise Triest returned, having successfully concluded his mission to Orrin. Martin, whose limbs were frigid through his having become unaccustomed lately to the chill night air, and whose courage through the lonely hours had fallen very low indeed, revelled in the new warmth, rapidly regained hope and confidence, and looked with the gladness and eager enquiry of boyhood about the place.

It was Paradise again—a world of healthy nature full of beauty. Dingles and dells, hills and meadows, cliffs and valleys laden with flowers and crowned with perfect trees greeted his sight in every direction. Rippling brooks, dancing streams, and stately rivers sang about him; and above the gentle rustling of the trees he thought that he could hear the music of the breakers of a distant sea.

After a simple prayer, Triest and Martin broke their fasts, eating some of the fruit which had been brought from Heaven, and some newly plucked

from the surrounding trees. The feast was a good one, and Martin flattered himself with the proud sense of hostship. The business of breakfast done, the eager monarch of the new world looked round for a place of future habitation. Triest pointed to the best spot, a gentle eminence touched on one side by flowing water, and surrounded at a comparative distance by healthy odorous trees, from which Martin, with laughing delight, heard come a chorus of bird-voices, reminding him well of the melodious nightingales of the old-world days, and of the better bird-music of Heaven. His ears were once more tuned to the sounds of mother earth. Triest then, murmuring words which Martin at the moment was too much occupied to catch, flew away, and the mortal, left alone, pondered as to what should be the earliest labour of his new life. In the midst of his musing, his eyes wandered to the pile of flowers and olive branches which remained from the store brought from Heaven. He ran to the sweet relics of that sweetest clime, to where in all his dreams and moments he yearned to return, and carried the flowers tenderly to the site of the future home. Then in a circle he planted them; and prayed that they would grow and be the glories of a hallowed home and a continual reminder of the living kingdom of God.

No sooner was this labour—the first of many happy ones—concluded, than Martin heard the rustling of branches. He looked about, and saw emerge from a shadowy grove troops upon troops of animals of thirty to forty different kinds—all beautiful or useful, none fierce and wild, some, like

the bellowing oxen and bleating sheep, were similar to the domestic animals he had once known well, while others were new to him, although he could trace in nearly all of these resemblances to animal forms of the old world. The procession of four-footed creatures passed by at the base of the hill. At its rear strode Triest. He raised his spear in playful salute, and cried to Martin: "There are some of your subjects, O King!"

Then the angel walked to the brow of the eminence which overlooked the stream. Martin followed, and gazed into the crystal depths. Triest touched the water with the point of his spear, and Martin saw congregate and then swim past a silvery multitude of fishes. Again the angel made his salute and said: "There are more of your subjects, O King!"

Triest pointed his spear to the sky, whose very deep, perfect blue was only occasionally crossed by speeding fleecy clouds. As he waved the weapon and gave a musical cry, it seemed as if a cloud containing many voices was coming close to the earth. Martin looked, and saw flying towards him, and then passing by, a procession of birds, similar to that of the beasts in the respect that it contained many kinds, songsters and domestic fowl, which were not unfamiliar to him, others comparatively resemblant of old types, and some quite strange. The birds, generally grouped in their families, had all flown past, when Triest for the third time gave the spear's salute and spoke:

"Yet more of your subjects, O Monarch!"

Martin stammered out his thanks for the display

of so much beauty and living wealth, and then the kind, companionable spirit, pointing to the country of grassland and grove, and signifying the earth's potential stores of grain and metal by stabbing the turf with his spear, cried—despite his playful mood the tone of his voice added meaning to the words—“And here, O mortal, is the kingdom of the perfect people!”

“Amen, Amen!” said Martin. “God grant me strength to keep my trust!”

Triest, now with seriousness in his face, repeated Martin's utterance, “Amen, Amen, Amen!”

The angel then, with intention, went away again, and Martin was left to face his problems and his labour.

The day went through the changes of its several hours and completed its course at length, Martin occupying its store of time by doing some good work. In all things he began with the simple beginning: he found he had to do so. With hard, muscular labour—for in this new world-life he was determined to do his own material work, unaided by the angels—he endeavoured to drag green branches from the ripe trees that could spare them, purposing to make some kind of shelter from the cold of the coming night; but the efforts of his arms were quite unfruitful: he pulled and pulled with might and main, but the healthy branches sprang back as though the trees were laughing at him. He must find a means for overcoming the difficulty! He sat and thought. There was no metal that he could weld and fashion into knife or axe. He had no means at the moment of pro-

curing fire to burn the branches from the trees. There was nothing outside himself to aid him, but he had arms and legs and hands wherewith to do the work, an excellent brain to direct his actions, and, best of all, the heart of a hero. The brave union and use of these possessions is very good capital—in the primitive world, the only capital. Martin remembered a story which a wise old monk had once told his religious brothers, and which they all, except Martin, had promptly ridiculed. It was to the effect that in the far-off days, before Tubal Cain had laid the foundation of the plough-share, the trumpet, and the sword, man had used stone—fashioned for divers purposes—wherewith to do the work of iron and steel. Stone was, therefore, what Martin must utilise, until he could unearth metal. But where should he find the kind of stone best suited to his purpose? As he pondered, the sough of the wave-beats on the distant shore reached him. Memory brought its visions. He must discover that sea; he might find flint near it.

It was rather difficult, at first, quite to determine the direction from which the sound came; so Martin, selecting a high tree which appeared easy to climb, forthwith ran to it, and was soon clambering up among the branches. After some ingenuity and effort he had risen to a height beyond the level of the tops of the majority of the trees, and, sheltering his eyes with his hands—for the unshadowed sunlight was becoming fierce—scanned all ways and listened with attention. At length he gained the general whereabouts of the sea. It was certainly some distance off, and he saw that his course would lie through the



forest which stretched onward beneath him. He carefully noted the direction of the sun, and decided that his wisest course was to journey towards that luminary, keeping it, to counteract its apparent motion westwards, slightly to his right.

Before descending from the tree-top Martin looked about. On all sides stretched forests of trees, full of the lush of life, and wearing vesture of spring-like green. Here and there were wide breaks in the spread of foliage—probably where pasture-land or a river or lake intervened—but, so far as he could judge from that eminence, his world was especially blessed with healthy arboreal life. There were no signs of mountains, or even of high hills, and no visible evidence of the sea he was in search of. Martin felt very lonely as he gazed upon that realm of vegetation, and reflected that he was the only human creature then within it. Suddenly he wondered, with tingling face and beating heart, when his companion was to be with him, and where she would come from: the Eve for whose presence he found that he was yearning, as truest lover yearns. But work was his duty for the present. He would prepare as well as he could a home for the coming bride.

He descended and walked steadily through the woodland, passing groups of fearless grazing beasts and playful creatures, watching nature's workpeople at their work, hearkening to the voices of the songsters, taking careful note of particular trees, hillocks, thickets, beds of flowers and watercourses which he passed by, so as to be able to guide himself home again. He strode on through the wood, examining with careful, critical eye the nature of its

possessions, until he found that he was very warm from the exertion, and that the sun was in its noon-tide place: it was time for the noon-tide meal.

Just then he came to a running stream, and for a short time watched the fish darting about in it. The water looked so refreshing that he flung his cassock and sandals from him and plunged in, diving and swimming with all the joy of strong life. He splashed the water, and shouted with the delight of living youth. Better—far better—was this healthy existence under God's blue dome of sky, in the middle of a world containing not one discontented thing, than that other life on that other earth had been, with its bricked-in limits, the confinement from nature and the accompanying narrowness. Better—far better—than that was this new land of noble possibilities and sinless impulses. So he rejoiced in his possession of it, singing and beating the water, and dreaming worthy dreams.

He sprang from the river and dried himself in the sunshine, running up and down a sward of velvety grass. Then, once again clad in the cassock of his order, with the knotted girdle at his waist and the sandals on his feet, he fell on his knees and praised God for all the goodness about him.

He gathered various fruits and ate; he drank the water of the stream, spooning it up in the hollow of his hand; then, his meal made, he continued his journey along a way which human foot had hitherto never trodden. The noise of the waves was now much louder; some lonely grey sea-birds circled in the air and gave their shrill calls; soon he came to the shore. There was an open space of undulating

meadow and then a belt of dark-green foliaged trees. Having passed through these, he saw a glittering line. He ran forward and stood at the edge of a low cliff, consisting of only two strata of chalk. There lay before him first a band of sand and rubble, sprinkled with rocks girt with seaweed and shells, and then in its majesty right to the far horizon, rising and falling with plaintive swell, was a lonely, moaning sea, nearly foamless, almost tideless, flecked with occasional ripples of sunshine, and with a very few sea-birds circling over it: the message it gave to its human visitant was one of pathos and loneliness, and of a giant power asleep.

Martin let himself down from the cliff to the shore, and found some sharp pieces of flint, which had fallen from the solitary stratum, and would suit his purpose. He waited for nothing else—there was nothing near to bring—but with five of the best fragments placed in the folds of his cassock returned hastily homeward. On his way he gathered stout sticks of fallen wood, deemed by him suitable for the handles of future axes and other implements.

When he reached home it was too late for the completion of the task he had set himself, the creation of an arbour of branches—for man without any tools but those provided by nature is necessarily a slow workman; the making of the axe, and then the selection and hewing of the best branches, would be a laborious business and a slow. But Martin was determined to accomplish something before the sun set. He quickly gathered a heap of dried leaves and moss, and fragments of fallen wood in a sheltered hollow, and then sitting by them struck two of the

pieces of flint against one another. If he could create flame he would have one servant and comforter—useful, magnificent fire. He struck the flints against one another, producing many wasted sparks, until his fingers tingled and his elbows ached. He paused many times during that long labour, cramped and wearied by the unusual work, but the rapid wearing away of the afternoon impelled him to renewed exertion. He dreaded a second chilly, unlighted night, such as the first had been, and although he hoped this time to be cheered with Triest's presence, yet fire in any circumstances would be a good companion, and he bent again at the monotonous toil, and endeavoured with wooing breath to fan fire into his world.

He accomplished his object at last—after more than one weary hour of effort—a yellow spark falling on the ready leaves and wood, cunningly breathed upon, flared for an instant into flame. Martin fed that fragment of fire with the skill which springs from necessity. It flickered on the verge of extinction. He trembled with anxiety. He coaxed it: it increased, it lived; Martin and his new world were possessed of fire. The heap of leaves and fragments burned rapidly, and Martin fed the blaze with plenty of fallen wood.

He leaned back wearied, but proud and pleased. Triest was standing before him, smiling approval.

"Well done, my flame-maker! What you have taken hours to accomplish I could have given you with a touch. But it is better that you should use your own faculties than depend on those of others. Well done! Now come with me."

Martin followed the few steps to the summit of his eminence.

"Look at the sky. What do you see?"

"It is very beautiful, but it is only sunset."

"Only sunset! You mortals are too modest; look again."

"Ah, Triest! Do not judge me so. I am not blind. I see the golden sun journeying into clouds of crimson. I read the lesson which that beautiful sight teaches—the passage of time, taking man a day nearer to his mortal end; but what is even that beauty, aye, and the significance of its lesson, to one who has seen Heaven, and learned lessons there!"

"True, Martin, but there are sights and lessons worth learning of Heaven on earth if you look aright. But it is not the departing sun I wish you particularly to see—look onæ more—well!"

Martin gazed about the sky.

"Yes, I see them—angels! Those, are they not, of the legion of Orrin? I see them journeying, though not together in one direction, but passing in between one another as if they were working out some aerial plan."

"You are right, Martin. They are completing the web of spiritual influence which now surrounds this sphere. You have thus one more safeguard against the destroyer. Heed what I say now! It is my privilege to complete Broon's teaching. You have been taken from earth, known Heaven, and been brought here to begin the perfect human life. The safeguards your recent experiences have given you are innumerable. You know them well. That

which Orrin's angels are now completing is the final one. Round this world an invisible net of holiness is woven; the emissaries of Satan cannot be kept away from here or any habitation of men; it would not suit God's designs that they should be. He wants a perfect human state, but Man has free will, and Man must keep perfection by his own efforts and his own worth, otherwise this world would not be a perfect state. Your work, then, is to baffle temptation by keeping true to your ideals. It is the work also of all your descendants. You have those ideals in good store, and they have been cherished and helped by Heaven. Preserve them through all things. You have now a further safeguard. No devil can come to this world without first piercing that spiritual web; you will so be warned that danger is near. That should be a quite effectual protection. Take care that it is so. Cherish your ideals to the uttermost part of them! Give nothing to the tempter. Keep your moral armour perfectly bright by the constant exercise of prayer and adoring song. Martin, be brave and true. All Heaven is watching your opportunity and yearning for your victory. You have been greatly blessed and honoured. The teaching of Broon, and what you have learnt of Heaven, have given you a fortress of knowledge which should be impregnable; keep it so. Labour happily, use your mind, have no idle moments, impart to your coming wife, and the future children, your wide experience; in all things be modest and true, then you will remain sinless and perfect; and when the time arrives, the death-angel will bear your soul straight to the life of Heaven. The probation of

Hades then will be needless, and one world at least, will testify to the impotence of Hell. . . .

"But Orrin's work is done. The web is woven. His warriors are gathering and I must return to Heaven with them. Farewell, Martin. God's blessing live with you! Be brave! Farewell!"

Triest once more gave the playful salute of the spear, though seriousness peeped through his smiles; then, spreading his wings, he sprang away towards the legion assembling above.

With sorrowful heart Martin gazed at the splendid band, which speedily went its Heavenward way. When the angels had gone, and he could see them no more, he realised that the night had come.

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## CHAPTER IX

### THE ADVENT OF LUCY

THE human solitary attended to the calls of comfort. He fed the fire until it sent out a most cheering warmth, the wood crackled and the embers glowed; then he gathered a store of dried branches for the requirements of the night—that fire was never to be extinguished; it cost too much wearisome labour to kindle flame for it to be allowed to die! Searching among the undergrowth for fuel he found eggs, a few of which he roasted in the embers. Those, with fruit and water, afforded a sumptuous supper; which ended, he said the full service of evensong, sang a hymn of his own immediate making, and went to sleep within the radius of the fire's influence. Martin's second night upon the earth passed away in refreshing slumber, among dreams induced by songs of night birds.

With the dawn he awoke, and sprang up eagerly from the mossy couch. His body was filled with life, his brain with plans, his heart with determination. He threw off his garment, ran along the little eminence, sprang over the circle of flowers which had been brought from Heaven, and plunged into the lake. The fishes darted about, startled



by this cataclysm, as Martin swam and dived and leapt and wrestled with the water in the fulness of muscular energy. His bath completed, he clambered up the steep slope through the fringe of reeds and groups of flowers to the blossom-crowned eminence which he called "home." Exercise and the warmth of the fire soon dried his body. While he was resuming his vestment the sun uprose in a blaze of silver brightness, and the world of creatures awoke to life. The carols of many birds flooded the daylight, the beasts browsing called to one another, the flowers lifted their dewy heads and opened their petals, welcoming the sunshine, the trees waved their branches and rustled their leaves as a newly-risen wind moved through them. Martin looked at the world about him, and knew that it was good. It was a world of happy work, of simple duty, and of sweet contentment. He must do his share of the labour of life; but first he must break his fast, and even before that he must pray. The first law instituted on that globe was made by Martin in the early hours of that second morning: the earliest moments of every day and of every enterprise were to be dedicated gratefully to God.

After breakfast he walked about the meadows and looked to the needs of the flowers and trees, much as he had seen the angels in Heaven do. Wandering creepers were assisted along their most profitable way, lovely parasite plants were prevented from endangering the trees they lived on, dead branches were as far as possible removed, faded flowers uprooted, a lost lamb carried to its bleating mother, a broken-winged bird taken home and tended. The

animals, some of which attracted by the fire had reposed not far from Martin during the night, looked at him with perfect confidence ; he was touched to find that many song-birds hovered about and followed him, as the birds of Heaven had kept company with the angels who loved them.

He returned home with a load of fuel and devoted himself to the making of his axe. He selected a long round branch of stout wood and reduced it to a practicable length by burning a portion from each end. Then, with infinite labour, by using the sharpest edged piece of flint, he split the head of the staff. It was most laborious toil, and the results were not very encouraging, for to do what he had done with his rude materials exhausted many hours. When evening fell the axe was but half completed ; nevertheless, it gratified him to know that some practical progress was made.

The next morning, after the first and earliest duties were fulfilled, he resumed his labours on the axe. He inserted the rude flint head into the split portion, which, owing to the springy nature of the wood, gripped it tightly ; then he pierced a hole at the end above the axe-head by constantly scraping with a sharp-pointed piece of flint, and through that drove a round wooden plug to keep the divided part together ; then he bound the staff above and beneath the stone-blade tightly with strips of tough bark. His first weapon and implement, his earliest real capital, was accomplished ; it was rude and clumsy, inadequate and imperfect in many respects, but in comparison with his unaided efforts, it was a wonderfully effective instrument : now he could do what his unassisted

hands could not have done—cleave the living branches from the trees ; if need be, with labour and patience, fell the proudest of the forest's wooded monarchs and score furrows in the eternal rocks ! Martin felt very proud as, with the maker's scrutiny, he contemplated his axe and wielded it ; and it was right that he should be so—there is no pride more worthy than that which exalts the heart of the maker.

In the afternoon Martin began the building of his house. He selected hale branches of the too well-wooded trees, and by cautiously burning them at the bases and hacking them with his axe, managed before sundown to gather an excellent pile of stout timber, six beams in all, from which he pulled the unnecessary branchlets. During his toil he heard angel-voices in the forest, but, occupied with work and day-dreams, he imagined the sounds were his ears humming with the harmony memory was constantly recalling—that living melody, the music of Heaven. In this, however, he deceived himself, for the sounds were angel-made, and not phantoms of the brain ; and ere he had completed the day's woodcraft, he saw with rapture Zuron and then Triest, with three unknown angels, emerge from the forest.

"Hail, brother !" cried Zuron to him ; while Triest gave the familiar salute.

Martin ran towards the approaching spirits.

"Welcome ! Welcome ! This is a happy meeting : it gives a glimpse of Heaven again ! Have you seen Broon ?" and many eager questions and comments rained from his lips. As soon as the angels had arrived at the eminence, Martin ran to where the best fruits grew and brought the guests bounteous festival.

"This is a goodly world, brother," said Zuron.

"Have you seen much of it?" asked the man interested.

"With these my comrades I have been all about it. There is every material inducement on the globe, to stimulate the healthy effort of a happy and contented people. The earth here has a soil which will reward a little care with abundance, and beyond the seas which stretch about this place are continents waiting for persevering settlers. Angels can see the day—to the angel judgment it is not very far hence—when all the countries lying fallow will be blessed with intelligent life. There are inlets and rivers which some day will be harbours and highways, holding ships laden with the blessings of a greedless commerce; there are hills and dales at present bearing nothing but wanton grass, which in due course will be waving with golden grain—food for a faultless people. Martin, my brother, it will not be in your years, but leave it as a legacy of duty to your children, and bid them leave it to their children, and so on down the generations, until the time for proper action comes, that, when the days are ripe, settlers shall go forth to these waste places of the world to bring to life and use the potentialities there. Bid them delve for the powers at present sleeping in the earth's deep womb, and capture and use the untrained forces of Nature—let them realise that there is useful power as well as useful beauty in Nature; but let them never slay or lose the beauty for the sake of the useful power. Let them earn all they may of God's material gifts, but at no moment ever forget that those gifts—useful or beautiful as they may be—are for the health of all men equally—that

nothing belongs to any man but is lent by God to him while he breathes and is worthy. And, above all, my brother, let not the gathering of material wealth displace intellectual effort and the just cultivation of the soul!"

Zuron paused, looking at Martin earnestly, and the man, anxious to show his appreciation of the angel's wisdom, said:

"All this counsel, Zuron, I will keep close to me. But will not you and the angels, and—dare I say it?—I, perhaps, as one of the then spirit world, come here and guide the actions of the men of that distant day, so that the earth may be rightly used?"

"The angels will always be about the world, as they are about all the worlds, until it is merely a dead accumulation of matter, or dissolved into gas absorbed by yonder sun: whichever God deems its destiny shall be; but upon you, and your children, depends whether the angels shall be potent influences or not. On every individual rests the future of his fellows. Keep sinless, and let all the generations remain so; never once allow the devil to triumph here, and the guardian angels will be visible and openly helpful; but as soon as a man sins, the angels are invisible to him."

"I shall battle for my trust," said Martin, with heartiness in tone and bearing. "I wish that the tempters would come, that I might vanquish them!"

The angels smiled with kindness at his eagerness, but Zuron said softly:

"Be not too hasty for that either. To avoid temptation is to defeat the devil. Avoid it while you may; but when you must face it, do so resolutely and conquer!"

"I will!" Martin cried enthusiastically. "I will! With God's help, I will!"

"Let it also be a legacy of duty," continued Zuror, "that these new nations—your children scattered in distant parts of the world—shall never be isolated one from the others. They must keep in constant touch, being really brothers in birth and blood, although the influences of environment may tend to differentiate the form and the colour of the skin. This unceasing effort after association is a vital duty. In this constant striving to keep as one in ideals and interests rests the satisfaction and progress of this world in the future. Remember, Martin, the moral of this my homily—your responsibilities are not merely personal: they embrace the whole of the future of existence here, the future of all this globe rests in your heart. Brothers," he then said to his celestial companions, "let us have music now."

The three unknown angels took their harps and played soft harmonies, the birds in the neighbourhood answered the melody with occasional solitary calls, and the beasts opened their ears and listened. Martin speedily put the relics of the day's work in order, tended the fire, and then, reclining on his bed of leaves, watched the five seated angels, whose presence made his eminence a place of sparkling splendour, and hearkened to the music of their instruments and their songs, until, soothed by their dream-wooding lullabies, he lapsed into sleep.

The next day Martin cut the remainder of the branches which were intended to form the frame of his habitation, and with eager axe sharpened their broader ends; then with another piece of flint he

scratched and delved laboriously until a series of holes was made in a circle; in these holes he fixed the several beams. The upper parts were interlaced and bound with strips of bark torn from trees in the vicinity. The simple house, completed, formed a true arbour, cool, comfortable, scented, sweet—a home worthy of his coming bride—a bower beautiful, fit for the Eve of his Eden. Ere the return of the angels, who with intention had left him during the daytime, and while still the sky was golden in the west, Martin, working with enthusiastic activity, completed that labour by trailing the light-giving flowers brought from Heaven up the main supports of the house. Around those branches the brilliant climbers clung, and, as if they knew the desire of their human possessor, they hastened in the ensuing days to glorify his labour by covering the edifice with festoons and clusters of a variety of blossoms.

Zuron and Triest returning, gave the structure and its future occupants a solemn blessing.

Contented days streamed past. Angels, interested in the destiny of Martin, came and went, bringing news of the worlds from Heaven, and songs and harmonies; and very greatly Martin enjoyed that varied angelic communion. Zuron departed after some time, but Triest remained on the world throughout that period of solitude, and never allowed a day to pass without coming once at least to converse with and cheer Martin—keeping his mind and ideals from the possibility of rust, and explaining many things. During those days Martin energetically went on with his labour and the organisation and foundation of the future. He improved his axe, in one

part of the country dammed a squanderous stream, lopped from trees and plants branches deemed dangerously fertile, created a pointed spade, from a hollowed branch-end made a vessel for holding milk or carrying water, and did a hundred other necessary acts of detail. He filled the days with pure thoughts and good, though simple, deeds, lived the perfect life as far as it can be lived with the sweeter part of humanity still in the vista of fascinating promise, gathered joy, holiness, and wisdom from the angels, and earned the confidence and friendship of all on his world that breathed.

Love! love! love! Like the swelling notes of a mighty organ, pealing among cathedral rafters, the thought of an ideal companionship suddenly clanged in the lone man's mind. He was at his labour in a bower of new-opened blossoms when a sense of ripe happiness flushed through him. He felt attracted and attractive: it was as if he were a lode-stone drawing something towards him, while at the same time he was being drawn to an influence somewhere else. It was as if a part of a circle were finding its complement; as if an imperfection were growing perfect; as if a long unfinished edifice were receiving its crowning pinnacle; as if a book with a new message were on the eve of beautiful completion. He felt all this, he did not think it; he was in those moments a sensuous rather than a reasonable being; he was possessed of an emotional joy which he could not have defined, and did not think of fathoming. He was happy and found the world happy. Love—more powerful than thought, than life, than death—true Love was living!



Triest appeared, and Martin saw that the angel was joyous as usual, but even more so than usual.

"More of my subjects, O Triest?" he asked playfully.

"No, O King," answered the angel, laughing; "your master now."

At that moment Martin, seeing Zuron, who had been some days absent, flying over the trees, concluded that Triest referred to that superb being, whose splendour, every time he saw him, seemed to have grown greater.

"Come with me, brother," said Zuron, returning Martin's salutation.

With the sense of an uncertain experience boding, Martin followed Triest and Zuron through the lovely woodland. The joy of the day gradually drew Martin's heart from vagueness to lightness. The world was so full of sunshine. Everything—flowers, trees, grass, animals, birds, waters, sky, angels—was glad. The impressionable mortal, as his heart-lightness grew, wanted to clap his hands and sing, but wisely he restrained himself; his eyes, however, were very bright, and he looked at all the wonders and beauties about him eagerly and appreciatively.

"Proceed, brother," said Zuron suddenly, and while Martin continued his way, he and Triest touched the flowers and fruits and saplings, called to the birds, and waited. •

Martin walked cautiously onwards, peering excitedly about, knowing well what he was to find, yet hesitating to confess even to himself his expectation. His heart throbbed, his face burned, his nerves trembled,—and continued increasingly to do so as he

walked among the glories of the wood. The joy which occupied his being grew into pain, and the pain into nervous agony. He stopped, fearful to proceed, and then looked back uncertain. Zuron and Triest were discreetly out of sight. Martin stood there until he regained strength of purpose. He became angry with himself for his cowardliness, and in an excess of self-accusation strode stoutly onward. Then he stopped again, suddenly. His bride had come!

Lying on a slope, her head pillowed in a cluster of flowers whose dewy petals kissed her brow and neck, was a woman sleeping. Above, shading her from the sun-glare, spread branches, holding a canopy of spring-time blossoms and leaves; and all about, in brake and bush, thicket and tree, were birds singing love's anthem. Martin felt translated to a second Heaven. His heart quaked with the awe of holiness. He knelt, and, clasping his hands, gazed at the sleeping form. Love's adoration was in his eyes. The sleeping one's hair was golden-red, it spread about her in a glowing luxuriance; her face and neck, arms and hands, were white, like marble pulsed with blood, for the blue veins showed on the whiteness; dark eyebrows and eyelashes framed and fringed eyes which Martin afterwards discovered were blue and bright, and possessed of many depths of colour and of thought. Her form, clad in its simple silken garment of clinging green, had the excellent fulness of healthy womanhood. Martin's ultimate wish was granted. Eve had come to his Eden, and Paradise was Paradise at last!

For a while he lingered gazing at this queen of

his earth, and as he did so, his active mind—his subconsciousness—was racing through a picture-gallery of the saints, comparing and contrasting with those canonised persons, the demi-deities of his old life, this beautiful woman. His heart was strangely abashed. He put out his hand to touch her hand, but drew his own back, its mission unfulfilled. His monastic training—a pure one—compelled him to regard this being as an idyll; in the monastery Woman to him had been an abstraction, a golden phantom, queen of a palace of dreams. He had adored and paid his vows to the Mother of Christ; with heart of pride he had imagined the triumphs, with actual bodily pain had shared the sufferings, of the maiden-martyrs; but all that pride and all that woe had, in the end, been devoted to abstractions which his brain had evolved and painted. Throughout his conscious life, actual woman had been absent, the unknown mysterious she had been a creature of visions only. Now she was to be with him altogether, a vital breathing fact, sharing his food, helping his life, laughing when he laughed, sorrowing when he sorrowed, really one with him; and naturally, on the threshold of the door which held the passage between these two states of experience, he trembled while he loved.

He rose to his feet and walked softly back to the angels.

"Well?" said Zuron.

"God is very good. Oh, that I may be worthy of such a companion!"

"She is beautiful," said Triest, "in mind and soul,

as well as body; she has the power to make any man holy. Do you love her, Martin?"

"It is as if I had been in a wilderness all these years, seeking for something which at last is found. Words cannot describe my feelings, nor even suggest my many mingled hopes and fears. My heart is bounding with glad life, my pulses throb with blood which is touched with fire. I feel now as though I were one of the company of immortals. All the world is filled with wild gladness, the birds are singing with nobler notes, the flowers are sweeter, brighter—like those which Broon showed to me in Heaven—the trees, sky, everything, is bathed with a soft, red light, so beautifying. Is this glorification of all things—this rapture of my soul—this all-pervading gladness—this religion—a transformation wrought by Love?"

"Ah, Martin," Zuron said, smiling, "now you are touching the mysteries. Love is a quick creator—a wonderful transformer. Where Love is, is always golden land."

"In Heaven," said the enthusiast, "the seventh circle is dedicated to Love! Love is the prime virtue."

"Aye, and in your life keep it so. True love is the strength, bad love—the essence of selfishness—the chief weakness of the worlds of men. Cherish your love, Martin. Keep it as the precious jewel which loses its light when the voice of anger or the plea of selfishness is raised. But she wakes, she rises, she is coming!"

Martin's heart beat an excited tattoo: he was at once hot with expectancy and ice-cold with awe.

"What is her name?" he whispered.

"What shall her name be?" said Zuron.

"What was she called where she came from?"

"Give her a new name. She would rather be called by the name you choose."

"I cannot—dare not name a name! Oh, this is misery!"

"Tell me. What does she seem chiefly to have brought to this, her future home?"

Martin looked round at the roseate world.

"Oh, brightness, colour, harmony, but more than all else, light!"

"Then let her name be of light."

"Aye, Lucy! Lucy! Lucy!" Martin cried enthusiastically, as if he were hero in the lists of chivalry proclaiming his lady-love. The glad name rang through the avenues, and was whispered in echoes among the leaves.

Lucy! Almost before the word had travelled for the third time from Martin's lips, the possessor of that name appeared. She parted a way through the high-waving grasses that clung to her, and came towards him. Trembling, he murmured: "Lucy, my bride, my love!" and held out his arms to welcome her.

In a sweet, low voice she spoke words of greeting. Martin understood their tone: he read their meaning by the expression, for they were in an unknown tongue. "Husband," was how his heart interpreted them, and his heart interpreted truly. Her voice bore manna to his soul. It was sweet and comforting, like an angel's caress. Lucy went to him. She took his hands, and raised her face: her eyes shone with love-light. Their lips met in the first kiss. There

was a hush, and then a chorus of silvery trills swelled from sweet birds' throats. All nature was in harmony with them, as, hand-in-hand, and silently, the lovers went towards their home.

Far away in Heaven the fœcsin for universal prayer rang out, and the angels in their orisons remembered Martin and Lucy. Throughout existence, whether flying along the pathways of space, or stationed on the myriad worlds, the angels joined in the devotions with their fellows of Heaven, hoping, remembering, rejoicing. Martin and Lucy, during the honeyed moments of that homeward walk, were the united objects on which the attention of the whole virtuous spirit-world was centred. Every angel was thinking of them then. All existence was affected by their nuptials.

In Hell, the fell Prince, conscious of the widespread celestial sympathy, and wondering thereat, knowing well that good was being done and happiness realised, determined that the day of spoliation and of Hell's revenge should not fail to be. The joy of all that is good is dust and ashes, wormwood—wormwood!—to the lips and hearts of Satan and the lost. Lord God! why do they exist, those pitiless ones—the obstinate, obdurate, unalterable damned? Why do they exist to mar what is spotless and beautiful?—to blot thy work?

Hush! God is all-wise as well as omnipotent. Who are we to question Him?

Heedless alike of angels' blessings and devils' wrath, Lucy and Martin went homewards, like lovers, leisurely.

## CHAPTER X

### THE IDEAL LIFE

LUCY and Martin went homeward leisurely: not the shortest way—for what was time or distance to them in that hour of honeymoon?—but by the bank of a stream which rippled and sparkled on through fields of mature green, under occasional awnings lent by the branches of bended trees, amid luscious grasses and armies of glorious flowers, in progress delightful. Birds soaring in the sky or chanting in the neighbouring thickets echoed the anthem of the lovers' hearts; grazing or wandering beasts of all the kinds trotted up to gaze at the happy human ones and to have their heads fondled and caressed; even the fishes rose to the surface and stared at the mortals whose sun-lighted forms, reflected in the water, had disturbed the depths of their sanctuaries.

But love's longest way reaches home at last. When Lucy and Martin arrived at the eminence, with its edifice covered and crowned by the glowing flowers of Heaven, they found Zuron and Triest there awaiting them. The angels gave them joyful welcome. Then Zuron took the right hand of each of the mortals.

At the touch still greater gladness thrilled through their nerves and veins and seemed to dominate Nature. The flowers and grasses quivered and gave forth new scents and sweetnesses, the winds breathing through the world of branches uttered soft harmonies, the distant sea sustained its wavering murmur; beasts lowed in sonorous satisfaction, the shriller voices of some of the animals, being subdued by considerate distance: but beyond all—above all—through all—the birds kept up their jubilations. Such a glad, mad, wild, merry chorus was surely never heard on any other planet! Then all the voices of the feathered makers of music were united and harmoniously blended into one splendid hymn—it was the Anthem of Marriage, with which the melody-makers of Martin's world joined to do homage to Lucy, their queen, at her simple enthronement.

In a solemn voice Zuron said the few words which in that bright place were all that was necessary.

"Martin, will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, till death and after death?"

Eagerly the happy man answered:

"Aye, Zuron."

Then in her own language, Zuron asked Lucy the question. Her answer also was evidently, "Aye," for the angel, joining the hands of man and maid, said loudly, as if for all on and about that world to hear:

"Those whom God hath joined together let no power put asunder!"

All the while the birds had continued their wild chorus; now, at once, as the angel silently consum-



mated the wedding by bending and kissing the joined right hands of the married mortals, they hushed, as if in obedience to a mysterious command—there was sudden absolute silence, conveying an almost stunning contrast to the preceding reign of sound. Lucy sank on to her knees, praying—she did not heed the solemn quiet; but Martin stood, for the moments, spell-bound by it. Then he heard a melody—as no doubt the two angels did also—which was not of his earth. Softly—almost in sobs, so great was the distance—came the Marriage Anthem which the angels of Heaven were singing. Martin hearkened to it with heart momentarily numb with excitement and wonder. Softly—so softly—the harmony, like a zephyr, breathed into his ears and then went its way through the worlds, on its passage from Heaven, through the universe, back to its place within the Gates of God.\*

Shortly after the marriage, Zuron and Triest flew away, and the beginners of that world of better men were left alone. Songsters, sing your sweetest; flowers, blossom kindly; sun, shine your brightest; for here is the perfect world, and here are the parents of the perfect people!

The months of golden honeymoon went on, and, although in the red vaults of Hell, Satan was weaving schemes of mischief and planning evil, while his angels were scouring existence in search of the world on which the favoured monk with the mysterious mission had been stationed, the search as yet was fruitless, and his plans were of no avail. There was no fiend nor temptation, no sin nor selfishness, on that fortunate planet. Peace prevailed throughout

and where Lucy and Martin lived and worked, love abounded.

In this state of paradise they watched the days lengthen to comfortable summer, and then shorten through fruitful autumn to a winter beautiful with flowers and possessed of no unpleasantness. In that Eden the seasons were gently marked: spring was distinct from summer, winter from spring; but there was no violent change from one season to another, there were no extremes in the conditions of Nature; in winter there was much of spring's sweetness and freshness, in summer there was some of the ripe fruitfulness which is autumn's special possession; but still autumn was autumn and summer distinctly summer. There were in the different seasons just enough alteration and development to prevent the sameness which diminishes the full appreciation of comfort and beauty. There was change enough occurring to enhance the various delights of that bright habitation of bliss. The flowers, obedient to the rules of Nature, lived and were beautiful, then in due order they went to dust, until from their seeds they upsprung in a new birth of glory. The birds and beasts multiplied as is their wont; the God-laid laws of existence acted in that world as truly—as certainly—as justly, as they act in every other part of material existence. Nature's world lived as Nature's world everywhere lives, but with a minimum of unkindness and cruelty.

Day by day Martin and his bride went about their duties. It was gentle work, gentle as everything else in that blessed life was; and as they laboured—in the manner of loyal, mutually helpful lovers—he taught her his language, which she delighted to learn.

As they came to the various things of their existence he pointed to, or touched them, calling them by their names, and she, in happy eagerness to learn, with nervous tongue, lisping, repeated them, until her accent became true and her speech was silver. All the animals, birds, flowers, trees, and inanimate facts in the sky and on the earth were named by Martin in this manner, and very soon Lucy had learnt the essential nouns of her new language, and proudly used them. With pride, still greater, her instructor realised her progress, and in lover's manner, praised, complimented, and rewarded her. Happy moments! happy mortals! Speedily, with constant practice, sentences were created and used. "To love," even then, in that grammar school of bird-songs, rose-bushes, and gurgling streams, was the first verb conjugated.

This simple mental labour stimulated Martin to extend his intellectual efforts. He determined to write, and the story of the development of the knowledge of God on his old earth, with the history of the birth, work, death, and resurrection of Christ, was to be his subject. He would write the Bible, as he remembered it, modified by experience. He had a rich store of mental material. As the lengthening days of summer approached, he felt that the time for the achievement of his big task had come. He yearned to be doing it. But what should he write with? He could find no materials sufficiently lasting for his purpose. Dried wood, the stronger river-bank reeds, these and other means scriptorial occurred to him; but were severally rejected; they faded and rotted too easily. Lucy and he wandered about their kingdom, at one and the same time practising their speech, tending the trees

and fruit and flowers, superintending the animal life. and searching for the penman's materials. At last, in a cave where many animals of a past day had found shelter and a sepulchre, were bones. Martin and Lucy gathered a number of the broadest ones and went with haste and eagerness homeward, to begin the writing.

Ere the sun of that evening had reddened, Martin, scratching laboriously with a piece of sharp flint, began to write on a yellowed blade-bone. His mind was full of facts of the old existence, and theories of the new. He was the inspired historian, yearning to express the universe of thought in his brain. Ideas were piled upon ideas, a veritable Babel-tower of prudent philosophy was raised in his mind, recollections and reminiscences accumulated, book-learning and the knowledge which the eyesight gathers, brought their armies of sifted and justified thought—all of them good ideas, waiting to be scratched into being: and the means for doing this, were a piece of flint-stone and a hard smooth surface of bone! The inadequacy of the material, measured by the greatness of the task, fretted the writer's soul. Martin almost knew despair as, after much finger-aching effort, he looked up to notice the sun half-way behind the horizon, and not one idea of that multiplicity of many in his mind expressed entirely.

Supper taken, and prayers said, Martin and Lucy retired to their couches within the flower-decked domicile. Very soon sleep spread its influence over them, and the happiness of the active earth-life was exchanged for that of dreamland. Age of love and innocence! Period of perfect joy! Unsullied days of

complete content! The only quite happy human life! Throughout the night the birds carolled, the flowing waters spread their music, fireflies flashed and darted up and down the avenues, and the scents of a forest of flowers rose in a wide sphere of faint exhalation, making the night as delightful as the night of a moonless world ever can be. It was an existence of absolute peace, and the angels in Heaven because of it, were glad.

On the following morning, as soon as the usual necessary duties of the day were done, Martin resumed his writing. He scratched perseveringly with his flint on the blade-bone, but for the multitude of ideas surging in his brain, the crude implements which circumstances had grudged him were hopeless. In the afternoon, after numerous pauses to rest his cramped fingers and permit his congested nervous energy to flow free, he abandoned the work; he felt it was no use continuing the history in that lame way. He must find better materials. For two days he worked energetically among the flowers, wondering all the while how he could obtain the things he needed. Meantime the flood of ideas did not diminish, and Martin became nervous to write; he was in a fever to express what was waiting to be expressed—every fibre of his being was impelling him to say his say. He was further influenced by a deep consciousness that the message he had to deliver was necessary to the good-wear of posterity, and nobody else could deliver it! He must write! The passion of the prophet was upon him! He must write! His message must be given! So with increasing intensity of determination, he sought adequate means,

Lucy and he were sitting by a river, watching the play of the fishes, and tracing the reflections of flowers and grasses in the crystal depths, when a similar idea occurred to them simultaneously. Lucy uttered a word—in the excitement of the moment she failed to realise that it was in her own old language—and pointed to the opposite bank of the river. At the same instant, Martin rose, and running a little way alongside the stream to a narrow part, sprang across; then taking a piece of flat fallen wood from where it was lying in the grass he went down to the level of the water and removed a portion of plastic clay from the shaded place it occupied. With excited hands he rolled a ball of it, and then, to test its suitableness for his special purpose, placed it on the ground beyond, and pressed it with his foot into a broad slab. Then with the same piece of wood he traced characters upon it. The characters were those comprising the name of his bride, and in the exultation of his love, as well as of his discovery of a possible means of easy writing, he shouted with glee. Lucy, witnessing his happiness, clapped her hands and threw a victor's wreath she had been weaving to him. They were like children joying in a prize.

Martin left the little slab where it was, preferring not to erase its burden of a beloved name, and dug more clay, which he carried home. After having with flint axe wrought a piece of wood into a stylus, a second time he began his labour. While he wrote, Lucy, with busy hands—occupied they always were in some useful or beautifying activity—fashioned wreaths and festoons of flowers, to grace the neighbouring branches and to wear, plaited coverlets

of dried grasses, and made baskets of stout reeds. While working she sang the better songs of her old life. With this sweet accompaniment in the hours of leisure, Martin carefully scored the letters which were to spell God's knowledge and the best world-wisdom to the truth-seekers of futurity.

Day by day he continued his task, himself gaining great benefit and joy from it. Every morning on his earliest rounds he gathered a due portion of the plastic clay which was carefully flattened into a regular shape. Uniformity and method were first principles with Martin in such an important work, and before night-time came, he had generally accomplished a stage in his story. Then he placed the utilised clay-tablets in an earth oven which Lucy had arranged near the fire, so that during the night they were gradually baked and hardened. The next morning he examined the work done on the previous day; with a point of flint improved uncertain characters, read the finished portion to Lucy, marked the slab so that its sequence to the preceding one was definite, placed it in proper order in a secure cave not far from the sea, and then began the next stage of the history. It was glorious work. It kept his mind in active trim, and brought much revelation to Lucy. It enhanced their great happiness by adding intellectual exercise to the physical and religious life they lived. Every night Martin found new lightness in his heart, because a portion of the undertaking was done. He realised all its importance. It was the beginning of his world's literature, and, as he had an ideal in that respect as in all else, the efforts he made were quite his best.

Very smooth and uneventful were the early days of that existence. The sinless hours passed on; the man and woman by their sinlessness and selflessness grew still less liable to sin and selfishness. They were fulfilling the mission God had given them. If they were true, their children were little likely to be untrue, for as the parent is, so the child certainly may be, and the retention of a sinless state on that world would be a probable fact and a grand example. Purity improved their beauty, happiness strengthened their health,—so for the body: their souls were such as the angels love. Physically they grew closer to perfection daily, and their spiritual progress was commensurate with that. But it was through the constant effort of prayer and devoted labour, and a never-ceasing intelligence and appreciation of the beautiful facts abounding that their powers were strengthened.

Even in a condition of temporal perfection—untroubled by the wiles of tempters—they knew it was of vital necessity still to strive after goodness, for an ideal is only realised and retained by continual wrestling with the real.

So the world rolled along its course. The aerial web wrought by Orrin's angels was still intact. The fiends had not found the hopeful mortals yet. The four seasons succeeded one another until the second spring had come. With the spring came new gladness and a rich possession—such a possession as drew Martin and Lucy nearer still to one another, and brought many angels with dowers of blessings from their places other-whither.

The earth was sweet and warm with morning's sunshine on a day in that second spring, when Lucy



gave almost painless birth to a daughter-babe. As Martin, with the emotion of thankfulness and the passion of fatherly pride in his heart, stood at the entrance of the flower-bounded home and gazed on his loved ones twain lying therein, he sang of his deep glad gratitude in a song which gave strength to the weary, smiling mother, and was pleasing to Heaven.

## CHAPTER XI

### LUCY BEGINS HER STORY

IT was on a Sunday afternoon—for Martin carefully retained the old-world days of the seven-day week, counting the first day from that on which he and Triest had arrived on the planet—that Lucy began to tell her story. The happy mother recovered rapidly, and during the gentle days of convalescence she commenced her tale.

Her old world had five moons, and was one of a flotilla of planets circling round a sun much greater than that which gave the globe of Martin's previous life warmth and light and force.

"I need not tell you of the early history of my country, nor of the rise and fall of nations and empires in the still younger years of that world. Their history is that of proud material power rising to a height, then crumbling and decaying into forgetfulness. Empires were raised by human strength alone; when that strength failed, as inevitably it was bound to do, the empires disappeared, sometimes with awful suddenness. The tale those lost powers and peoples tell is full of moral and warning. The mounds, which contain all that is left of their palaces, rise in a desolate wilderness—

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they are the sepulchres of a pride which did not condescend to remember God, and monuments of a might which the angels must recognise as weakness very weak.

"All I need do now, Martin, is describe generally the life which we in that other planetary existence had to live, and from which—fortunate I! for I have met you—the archangel Zuron took me one never-to-be-forgotten day."

Lucy paused to kiss the babe which looked up, and to the mother seemed to smile. Martin, meanwhile, gazed gladly on the perfect picture before him, his bride and babe its central objects. As a background to Lucy was the home with its scarlet and golden blossoms burning from a robe of green; above swung branches, and beyond the branches domed the deep-blue sky. The plaint of rippling waters and the twittering and carols of birds added melody to the music of her voice. The place for the ideal life!

"Many years went past. Very slowly, very certainly, a new and better order of things prevailed. A somewhat less selfish civilisation was quickened amongst the people. Population and wisdom spread all over the earth. Out of the chaos of peoples emerged five great definite races which grew and grew, and conquered and explored, until the whole of the habitable parts of the world were settled by them. Every one of these powers was an empire, proud and mighty; every one regarded the others as enemies to be feared or fought with arms and diplomacy.

"Time passed. These five empires, each one respecting the power of the four others, kept an armed peace, and the weighty years which went by

helped in the prevention of war; but every man was a warrior, every woman could make bread and bind wounds, every child was trained to fulfil his or her patriotic destiny. For the tribe, then the nationality, then the nation, then the race, was successively the political ideal of the people, until the general aspiration of that humanity broadened to the great consummation—but of that I will tell you in a little while.

“There was, of course, another ideal, the spiritual, which influenced and constantly drew Godwards the people of my five-mooned world.

“From earliest days, the inhabitants of that sphere knew that God is the Creator of the world, that the universe is His treasure-house, and every star which studs it one of His own jewels, that the life on every inhabited world is His life implanted in creatures which He made. That fact we, never doubted, though there were mysteries in our religion which from their nature could not be read by us, principles laid down which our wisdom could not justify; but beyond such considerations, we realised that there was a Mind wiser than ours, and we had faith that in God’s due time, all the mysteries and unfitting circumstances would be explained and made fitting.

“We wondered whether the sinners of the earlier dead empires would be lost, and then came to our understanding, by gentle influences, the knowledge that to redeem the souls of the ignorant of all ages the Son of God had given Himself a Sacrifice, and—divine humility!—had made the sacrifice by dying a death of shame, on a world smaller than ours and comparatively insignificant, one of a solar system which

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we had never seen, and of whose character and whereabouts had no knowledge. Of the physical fact we knew little, but of it and its spiritual significance we had no doubt. The story of Christ, from His Virgin Birth to His Resurrection, was known by us well. Every detail of the divine story was very definite to us. It had been delivered to the world by inspired influence, and was written by the pens of saints. The Church was slowly organised. Religion went everywhere with the people: all over the world it was much the same. Each of the five proud races, though different in their ideals and characteristics, owned one Over-Lord, Christ. He was the King of the Peoples. In the realisation and worship of Him all the nations joined. Politically, they were at first asunder, but in the religious sense they were always truly joined. Years upon years drifted by.

"At first the universal Church was an institution of splendid simplicity. The men and women who devoted themselves to its work were the chosen of the people, and worthily honoured for their unselfish lives, and the power of their minds. The ministers were shining patterns; good preachers, good workers, living self-sacrificing lives. So far as they could, in the earlier poorer days of the world, they lived in accordance with the Ideal of Christ, and in face and character grew not unlike the Saviour of all men. •

"But gradually, as new countries were developed and the various treasures of the earth were found and garnered, the character of humanity slowly changed. There was an intensifying of the desire for material wealth, and an increasing knowledge of and pride in

possessing the benefits and comforts which the use of wealth conferred. Men began to build unnecessary houses. Towns grew up; turning hills and valleys, where God's winds had blown and flowers had blossomed, into places of smoke and stone. Some rivers were stained and spoilt. Human inventiveness and energy were triumphant. Material wealth continued to increase and accumulate; as they did so, the character of humanity and the character of the Church still further changed, for, as experience tells me, the religion of a people shows, as nought else can do, the heart and mind of that people. In all ways simplicity was becoming lost. It was a grievous loss. Much happiness went with it.

"The old divinely-appointed custom of one-tenth part of all wealth produced being given to the Church for the strengthening and spreading of its social and religious work was well maintained, consequently the Church became rich; its priests, through a growing fondness for formalism and ceremony, forgetting their human duties, for a time did not use all the wealth that they held. It accumulated and accumulated, and the Church grew more and more rich. Then, forced by the very magnitude of their possessions, the priests lavished their wealth on unspiritual ecclesiastical things; they purchased rich apparel to wear before the jewel-encrusted altars, built vast, magnificent churches, and adorned them with costly stones and blazing colours. Slowly, over the drift of years, the style of the services changed. As the external and internal simplicity of the edifices had been suffered to decay, so the simplicity of the worship went. A needless ritual gradually grew, the

old liturgy which had been a hallowed relic from the earliest days of the Church was altered, with omissions and additions suited to the fancy of the day, but out of accordance with the divine origins. After a while some men talked of 'isms' as though 'isms' were angels, and sects were born. A meaningless elaboration of things was prevalent generally through the world.

"This trend of affairs was the almost unnoticed work of centuries, but it was real. The Church and the World had distinctly altered from their original condition. Symbolism in the one, materialism in the other, were threatening the purity, the life, of both. Mammon began to dominate, and for a time his dominance was not healthily protested against, so that in the mart, even in the home, in many places where men met, selfishness and worldliness were indulged, without thought of the consequent shame.

"In an effortless state the world of men rested. It was the time for determined action; failing that, it was the time of the beginning of decay. After many centuries of real and rapid progress—of steady marching towards the light—there was a pause, sustained; the consequence of the unnoticed growth of carelessness in important things, and carefulness in regard to the unimportant. Was it still to be progress; or retrogression into decay, and thence unto death? The holiest men trembled. There were visions and prophecies.

"It was the Church—the Catholic Church of my five-mooned world—which realised the danger and the need for its action. Resolutely the best men

and women of its communion roused themselves, and gave themselves, and worked. All saw now with eyes which dread of brooding failure had made clear. The people of the Church began by reforming themselves. They gave their ornate unnecessary vestments to the poor to clothe their children with; they cleansed their liturgy of the elaboration and mere formalism which had crept into it; they revived simplicity. The Church, by its resolute, wise, self-sacrificing efforts, again made itself the spiritual power of the world. Then it nerved itself and prepared to encounter Mammon, materialism, and the vices, weaknesses, meannesses, vanities, which had been permitted by an incautious humanity to grow within and threaten the soul of the community.

"A bloodless spiritual war began. There were many saints and heroes living then in our world. The Church was truly Christ's. It was the champion of good against evil, and bore victory in the conflict throughout. There was in the end no hope in resistance to it. One by one the citadels of the enemy were taken, and his power dispelled. Mammon, the father of many sins, was the stoutest opponent. It was a long struggle with him. Selfishness, Greed, and Worldliness, which are his well-loved children, all had the ardour born of their sire. But the Church in its purity of purpose, aflame with the enthusiasm of its soldiers, fiercely attacked the evils in turn; inevitably, in course of time, they began to tremble and fail. When I left the world with Zuron it was one where great dangers had been overcome, and great evils crushed by the unconquerable power of a holy organisation of determined



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religious men. The Church can do anything when it is really Christ's Church.

"Materialism which, insidiously at first, then openly, had penetrated the community, was an enemy not difficult—in that world—to vanquish. Despite the innumerable forms it took—from rank black atheism to the nasty mummery of some spiritualistic semi-scientific sects—each and every one of them was dealt with, by reason and example, until it fluttered out of mischief in flushes of shame. This victory for religion could not, however, have been but for the resolute spirit of the Church. Had it not at first and entirely thrust from it formalism and other deadly fancies; had it not clung close to the rules of love and charity; had it not possessed through and through, and used, the power of the Holy Spirit, it must have failed. But it did its work; it fought vice and ignorance fiercely; it won. Materialism died, vanquished utterly.

"Thus the Church saved the world, continuous retrogression was stayed, there was progress again.

"It was not untroubled progress, though. There were naturally, from time to time, outbreaks of jealousy, suspicion, selfishness. It is not possible for a humanity, endangered as that humanity had been, to progress always upwards. There must be—there were, necessarily—lapses. But retrogression never brought despair. It only caused a new determined effort on the parts of the militant virtuous. The Church, after it had regained itself, never lost heart. Its priests clung close as life to the ideals Christ had given them. So the ten-

dency was always, in spite of these lapses, to progress upwards.

"There was once a high priest, arrogant and vain, who presumed to excommunicate a man for independent thinking. This man, we and he realised afterwards, was wrong in his views, while the priest happened, in his opinions, to be right. But the act of excommunication, by endeavouring to put one soul out of the pale and hopes of the Church, drew every other person in the world—ecclesiastical as well as lay—into sympathy with the one formally dispossessed. The high priest found himself, through his want of charity, divorced from his fellows. His own great church was empty. He stood alone. He realised his error. He went to the excommunicated man, and, taking his hand, led him—followed by the troubled multitude—to the altar. There he kissed his brow, and publicly withdrew the ban which had, in effect, only outlawed himself. The world did not forget that experience. There was never again a priestly excommunication. There was, indeed, through it a new sanctification of tolerance, and a considerable quickening of love. Bad men, through shame, sometimes excommunicated themselves; afterwards, when their self-imposed penance was effectual, returning regenerate to the fold.

"For the first time, then, the divers branches of the Church sought whether it was not possible to make all humanity one, and end for ever racial prejudices, political jealousies, partisan ambitions. Patriotism, which had been the noblest and broadest ideal the world had hitherto held, was gradually and by all-

round effort lost in cosmopolitanism. The people of the different nations were no longer rivals, but acknowledged brothers and sisters in that world-wide human family, equals and lovers all.

"At once the vast racial armies, as fighting forces, ceased to exist. By universal agreement the sword was broken, but the military organisation was not destroyed; its form was maintained, and its power used for social purposes. The manhood of the world exercised its trained and united strength to crush abuses and fight whatever curses continued to exist.

"Slowly, surely, by stages of brave advance and lessening retrogression, progress marched. In peace and content, comfort and charity, the years swept by. The world was a sphere with a great deal of love on it."

Lucy paused. The shades of evening had begun to creep, the good-nights of the wild life were being expressed. While the sleeping babe was being placed by her mother in the grass-scented cot, Martin wandered away into the woodland. Lucy's words of the Church endangered by its loss of simplicity had thrilled him unpleasantly.

He thought of the religion of his earlier days. Had not that monastic Christianity too, with its ritual, ceremony, and assertive monopoly of Catholicity, possessed the seeds of a danger similar to that which threatened religious ruin in the world whence Lucy had come? His own question frightened him. He sat on a mound, surrounded by dew-damp flowers, and thought. He took deep breaths, absorbing as much of the night-world's earthy smell as he could;

his nostrils welcomed the scent which rose from the ground and was given off by the trees. Deliberately and critically he said word for word, in the original tongue, the services for matins and mass which so often had gone from his lips in the Monastery of the Blessed Ascension. Were not he and his fellows then the victims of thoughtless words, written and framed by by-gone men, and had that regular repetition of phrases and prayers, not in the vulgar tongue, really the virtue which once he thought it had? He shivered with cold, still he sat there—sadly critical, wretchedly wondering.

He heard happy sounds. Looking up he saw flying over the forest, shedding circles of light and glory around them, illumining the sleeping earth beneath, a group of several angels, singing as they went. They passed over, and went beyond out of his sight. Their appearance and passage had strengthened him, removed his fears, recreated his great purpose. Men make errors and die, their errors often live and work mischief, but the angels see the end of the errors. That life of the monastery was an old life, dead to him; let it remain dead! There was no use shedding moans over it. His purpose was with the present and the future. He rose from the mound of his tribulation and strode confidently homewards.

The past was buried; his heart was strong for the fight of the future. The music of the night-birds inspired him to song. He chanted the anthem his soul was then making, as, guided by the light-giving flowers from Heaven, he found his way to happiness and rest.

## CHAPTER XII

### A PEOPLE OF HIGH INTENT

SOME days passed before Lucy happened to resume her story ; but both the parents of the new life thought a great deal during the time intervening of the principles implied in it. Under the influence of those thoughts, Martin began to take exploring rambles, examining the world that was his—for a home and a grave—looking at all that Nature did in her wide world, learning the lessons she had to teach, curbing the possible cruelties of the vegetable life, subjecting his purposes and himself to a rigorous examination, reviving his ideal with recollections of Broon's words and of Heaven.

He then began to transplant slips from the celestial creepers which climbed about their home at the foot of various trees in the forest, so that in the darkness might ever gleam the beautiful, comforting lights of the flowers of Heaven.

Lucy of necessity kept within the hallowed district of which home and baby were the centre ; but both the responsible mortals were scrupulous in their efforts to retain the peaceful human life.

There had been discussion between them as to whether the infant ought to be baptised. Unable

themselves to solve the problem satisfactorily, they made united prayer to God for guidance, and in speedy answer Zuron appeared.

"No," said the archangel, "no formal act of entrance into the Catholic Church is required in the perfect world. All sinless babes born to sinless people are, from the fact of their existence, members of the Catholic Church; and in the sinful worlds it is conduct, and not the performance of a certain rite, which determines entrance into the opportunities of Heaven."

So that difficulty was settled, and Zuron after some speech with the happy pair went away to do further service among the worlds.

It was on another golden evening that Martin asked Lucy to continue her description of the life on her earlier world. He had just finished his day's due portion of the great history, and was resolving a new division of facts in the crucible of his mind. This progress was merely negative. His ideas came to definite fruition through no special effort of his. His mind was, as it were, always at work digesting them, and it seemed to assist the process for his brain to be occupied with other concerns for a time. Therefore, to listen to Lucy and her review was at once instructive and restful for him. When he asked her to continue, she was busily occupied working for her baby a warm garment of wool taken heedfully from the lambs of that spring. Without pause, she went on with her story.

"I have spoken of the general progress of the world I lived on. Now I will speak of the immediate surroundings of my life—of my own people.

"We were a leading branch of the most progressive race in the world. Our empire was spread to all parts of the earth ; where our flag flew, the principles of liberty and humanity were dominant. Our power, we believed, was the special gift of God, and we used it, and preserved it, and increased and spread it in the manner, and only in the manner, which we believed He would approve. Before our race settled on the new lands slavery was often active there, and cruelty practised by the not yet civilised peoples ; but the efforts of our rulers broke the evil customs ; we said with truth, that where our flag flew, slavery and tyranny could not live. The other races, recognising the beneficence of our rule, hastened to accept our ideals, and to adopt our practices. That was how the civilisation which lives was spread. The races used their organisations to increase happiness and the knowledge of truth. The movement was world-wide ; every man and woman took a part in it, and earned the right to enjoy the satisfaction its success occasioned.

"In the earlier days of the later civilisation, a certain great man thought that power was personal ; that on him rested the future governance of the world of men. By effort and ability, he forced his way through the human ranks, and influenced the minds of his national brethren. He saw visions of a wide empire founded by his genius ; and braved the opinions of the world as he built his purpose. At the head of an army he began a crusade for new territories and a big name. But the world was too advanced then for that kind of success ; and gradually his soldiers began to drop away. They had all, by

right of birth and natural intelligence, freedom to adjudge the wisdom and justice of any enterprise their nation entered upon; so, as the glamour of their new crusade wore off, as they realised that its success was not for the world-good, they saw more clearly the true issues involved; and one by one, in ever-increasing rapidity of succession, claimed the privilege to retire from the adventure. The leaders of the army were the last to go, but they, too, went ere the end, and the conqueror found himself at the enemy's gates—at the gates of those he would have wronged—a man without an army, enduring—worse than the scorn—the pity of the world. There were no more would-be conquerors after that. The benefit of the whole community—the well-being of the commonwealth of the world—was the object all men desired. They saw where true honour lay, and knew that it could not be brought with force, nor possessed by any person who sought it.

“Naturally, despite our cosmopolitan aspirations, I regarded the people of my dear country as the best in the world; but every one of the races excelled in some respect, and there was among them none of that silly prejudice which might prevent one nation appreciating the excellences of the others.

“In our country Nature was loved passionately; we regarded all its creatures and possessions as joys and treasures to be sacredly guarded. In the earlier years, in the lust for gain, parts of the country were befouled and blistered, as though Mammon had kissed with destroying lips the places where material wealth had been gathered from the earth and made useful. At first this spoliation of Nature was not



regarded ; but in time, the blots became places of shame. The inhabitants saw that their greater material wealth was not worth the consequent ugliness. The mammon-smitten towns were then transformed into new loveliness, or deserted. Flowers blew once more over parts of the blackened country ; but some places were not recoverable to beauty. The soil was rotten, through centuries of the worst neglect. Those spots of lost beauty lay deserted, bearing gaunt, unsightly ruins, reminders of an old greed dead, a moral and warning to the selfish.

"It came to be seen also, that the possession of riches does not necessarily imply happiness. There had been many men possessed of abnormal wealth, whose object of life seemed to be to increase still further their possessions. They took advantage of the foolish and the poor, and even combated one against another to secure new gains. But the majority of mankind, taught by the Church, had come to see that these abnormally rich ones were exceptionally wretched. They lived lonely lives, or were surrounded by flatterers and false friends, which is the worst loneliness. They often met violent deaths : if they died in nominal peace, they were haunted with remorse for wasted opportunities, or they met the Angel with dread and fear, because they could not take their gold with them. Some were wise at once and renounced their idol, spending their wealth in the cleansing of impure rivers and the restoration of the darkened towns. At last it became generally recognised, that the best wealth was the power to do good and obliterate misery ; gradually, there ceased to be men abnormally wealthy ; then

it was also seen that there were none—as before there had been—miserably poor. Two great principles—unselfish self-help and glad self-sacrifice—were suddenly realised and everywhere practised. People raced to help a case of need; the assisted, unless very old and past the age of work, were ashamed of being helped, and strove to attain and keep an honourable self-dependence. Thus hopeless poverty disappeared.

“The raising of the general standard of comfort brought a higher level of culture. There ceased to be wastrels of wealth or of knowledge. Art and literature were throned in every home, the walls of the houses were bright with pictures. Every cottage in the land was a joy to the eye and mind, being outwardly painted in harmony with the colour of Nature round it, while about its walls and over its roofs clomb flowers.

“All the people were poets, of heart as well as of mind. True poetry lived, was learnt and treasured; mere verse soon died. This was the method employed. A man or woman who composed a song or other work, fastened the production to the door of the common-hall or to a prominent tree on the people's playground. There it was read. If it were worthy, people spoke of it, and quoted it. With care and reverence the approved work was taken into the common-hall, and preserved among the documents of the people, while copies were made and circulated; and its maker had wide-spread honour. If it were merely poor, as the vast bulk of these productions was, it remained on the door where it was fastened, neglected and unsung, until

in the sun the writing faded, and the wind and rain destroyed it."

"Can you repeat any of the best poetry?" asked Martin.

"No, I could not do justice to it," answered Lucy. "I would rather not try."

Martin murmured his regret.

"There was poetry welded with reason in all the ways of life. The dress of the people was comfortable, natural, and beautiful. Hours were set aside on every day for all—men, women and little ones—to play. This unity in the hours of laughter was continued in the hours of work. Men and women were thorough comrades, sharing in all things equally, loyally, lovingly. Woman was an ideal to man——"

"As you are to me, my Lucy!" Martin said.

"And woman lived up to the responsibility of being idealised. The children were idealised too. Happy country! it became thronged with poetry and love, gay with ideals, and yet—and yet—how vastly superior is this; for that world was not sinless, and there we knew no angels.

"At sunrise the people rose and went into the fields—in bad weather the churches—to worship; then to the common-hall to breakfast. That was the meal of the day when all the village community, but the sick and bedridden, dined together. It was the means of welding in firm union the comrades of the village. Then strangers and wanderers were welcomed without questioning, whatever their condition might be. It was the communal feast when the fact of brotherhood in the world was emphasised, and starvation rendered impossible. The children were served first,

waited on by their elders. Until all were fed the rulers of the village did not eat.

"After the communal meal, men and women with a will worked, and children went to be instructed. Every man laboured at what best suited the talents he was born with, and the children were so taught that no natural gift should be neglected or wasted. Consequently, there were no men or women fretting over unfit toil, and the youth of the land looked forward eagerly to the coming of the years of work because it meant liberty to use their trained abilities and natural powers in the pursuit of a self-chosen appropriate life-object, nor did this mean that the less pleasant work of the world was not done; there were always men and women ready for the sake of others, if not from personal aptitude and preference, to combat and remove the inevitable disagreeable.

"With the midday meal—held, in family—work ended, and the hours of culture and play began. In the summer the flower-land and meadows were filled with laughing active people; in the winter the home and the common-hall were the places where recreative instruction was given and taken, and music, dances, and games enjoyed. At sunset, the third meal; at dusk, family prayers. With night the peoples' day really closed. The sunless hours were silent with the repose of peace. The people slept well because they were duteous and happy."

"Men in that life were sometimes churls; and although the rulers of a village could consign wilful boors to an academy where art was practised and manners mended, there was still, when I left my country, very much work for the leaders of life all

over the world to do. But it seems to me to have been indeed a place of hope, a sphere of hope, though not so thoroughly hopeful a place as this; and perhaps the angels saw it differently."

Many other details of life in that five-mooned world did Lucy speak of, and daily discussion passed between the lovers of the principles which governed the ideals of the peoples and the acts of their leaders.

But this is not the story of that world.

With a kiss Lucy's tale ended. The next day Martin began to put it on his tablets, that posterity might know something of the polity of a world elsewhere, and so broaden its philosophy of humanity and the social needs.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A PASSING

AND what of Lucy herself?

As Martin in his first world had been possessed with a passion to be of beneficent use, so she from her earliest days had felt reserved for a particular end. How this idea had ever come to possess her she did not know; but from her youngest years she had realised—the impression was part of her being, growing with her growth, rising with her aspirations—that she was to be devoted to some definite service of after-good, consecrated to the fulfilment of a splendid purpose one day to be revealed. This ever-active inherent conception of divine appointment had been so clear to her that she devoted herself to preparing for her unknown mission. In a great old garden, with its flowers needing care, its colony of birds to be loved and fed, its ancient trees, its hundred-and-one thought-providing facts, she had dwelt, a maiden-hermit, studying good books and the best human characters, watching the development of, and helping to solve the many problems of an intricate world.

Consequently, when one evening in that sweet retirement, during the saying of her prayers, an angel had appeared to her and called to her to go with him,

without demur she obeyed. She knew that at last the purpose for which she had lived—her destined purpose—was begun. In a merciful trance she was borne from the little oasis in the five-mooned world to the new Paradise where there was to be humanity without sin. Falling asleep under the trees she had loved since childhood, she had awakened on the bank of flowers in the new world and had risen to meet Martin, knowing him at once as the husband and the comrade of her heart. The life spent with him had been so happy, so grandly in accord with her best ideals, that she had no moments of fear lest her purpose had in any respect been missed. The great object of their union was end enough for all her born enthusiasms. Every day with its wealth of love and duties had been a new delight to her. The truest of women, she did the true woman's work perfectly well, and Home—her especial queendom—was to Martin what every home on every sphere might be; all the new world to its farthest places was the better for her presence there. Oh! the golden power, the royal influence of the loving woman! She can throng a hovel with brightness and touch despair into living hope; her sympathy is beyond all riches.

The quiet days went on. Martin and Lucy with their babe found the sinless life very pleasant. Their tasks were many and joy-making. They knew no sorrow then, but daily improved their happy circumstances, widened the circle of their sway, and were known to the birds and beasts—possibly even to the flowers and trees—as wonderfully kind. Occasional converse with angels—of whom Zuron and Triest

were the most familiar and frequent—completed their various delights. More than they had could not be wanted in the perfect world.

But sorrow came to them suddenly, quick, poignant woe which pierced to the heart at once. No earthly life can be without pain; and on a sudden, with a swiftness that numbed, came sorrow's sting.

Lucy was tending her little garden of herbs and chosen flowers, carrying into practice the cultivation of the fittest.

Martin, as was his wont, had gone on his round of inspection, visiting the haunts of the animals, and generally seeing that justice was done in Nature's commonwealth. He had taken the baby with him. Resting in his ramble, he put the infant down, seating her in a throne of thornless flowers and dry mossy earth. Then, lying on the turf before her, and leaning against a tree, he had taken from his pouch—made by Lucy from the disused cowl—a rude pipe of ten stops, his own handiwork, through which with self-taught art he breathed simple tunes, and was about to re-create one of the airs of olden days, when he noticed a strange pallor creep into the sweet little face and a new expression grow in the brightly intelligent eyes; at the same time added glory seemed to be infused into the garden, as if every flower and other beautiful fact had new beauties and sweetness imparted to it; it was as though an angel invisible were present. Hastily, with anxiety cold at his heart, Martin knelt by his darling and tenderly raised her, kissing her cold lips and listening to her labouring breaths. His fond alarm increased; he rose, and then, taking her in his hands, lifting and carrying



her with exceeding care, so that no jolt nor jar should shock or terrify the little maid, sped swiftly homewards. Lucy was coming to meet them. Her prescient heart knew that something was not right, and that she was needed. With a big question in her eyes, answered silently by one eloquent, anxious glance from him, she took the babe. Gently she undid the simple garments, with motherly fingers soothed the restless limbs, then, to quicken the wandering consciousness, sang, with breaking voice, the favourite lullaby.

But human efforts were of no avail : slowly, sweetly, earthly life and earthly breath ebbed from the little being ; like a flower finding a better garden, she passed.

Then great sorrow broke into the parents' lives. It struck them so hard, piercing and tearing them with its sudden vehemence, that they were tearless. Numbed with the agony—so numbed that they could do nothing but dumbly pray—they sat and stared with straining eyes at the lifeless body before them. Those moments—for though it seemed a very long time to the bereaved parents, that period of poignant grief was really not a long time—contained a trial. Then the strength of the faith and virtue of Lucy and Martin were tried, and the angels joyfully recognised that the faith and virtue of the chosen mortals could stand the strain of the greatest sorrow in the category of human afflictions.

Gradually the mourners grew conscious that they were not alone. They saw angels, a joy-making, sparkling throng. In the fore-front of the celestial visitors, by the side of Zuron, and near Triest, was

one with wings of orange, wearing on breast and helm the crest of the company of Azrael. In his hand he held a sword—symbol of office!—but this one sheathed with roses. He was a death-angel! The truth smote the parents sorely. Their baby was dead.

Tears crept into the eyes of the stricken mother, and Martin strove, to subdue the choking in his throat. Shattered dream-castles swayed dizzily before their eyes. How many fond expectations were then smitten and killed! But Zuron smiled to them, and the death-angel whispered in the kindest speech:

"Do not be sorry. Why should you weep? Be glad—rejoice! Your baby is living, and now can never die! Think! What is death? The happy change: a passing from one condition to a better. To the pure it is but a passing into the place of triumphant purity. Rejoice, then! Why should you weep? Be glad! Her soul was spotless. She is Innocence victorious, and has gone from you to God."

The words and the manner of their saying had the effect desired. Lucy and Martin turned to each other and pressed each other's hands, the angel's consolation had banished the bitterest pangs; but still their heads were bowed as they gazed upon the form once so full of life, so playful, so loving, now so still.

The heavenly ones assembled chanted a chorus triumphant, and with harps and other sweet instruments increased the joy of the funeral song.

Although the passion of their pain was relieved

the parents were still dazed by the suddenness of the blow; so Triest, the kindly comrade-spirit, took them apart and completed their consolation with words of loving wisdom. He showed them the angels' view of earthly death, and reminded them that for the little immortal just divested of mortality, there was no call for the probation of Hades. Hades, for her, was abolished. She was the first to be victorious in that little world where there was no sin. With sweet words and Heaven's wisdom the sympathetic spirit soothed the two, and all their pain was gone. They were at last able to rejoice—not in their daughter's death, but in her passing—that she had passed, and now could never sin.

In mood resigned, but not unhappy, they returned to where the body was lying. Martin plucked grasses, deftly Lucy wove them into a winding-sheet; then he laboured with his spade, and soon a grave for the body was made. There was no lugubrious advertisement of woe, there was not even the splendid utterance of the passing bell, no flower-lives were uselessly taken at that first funeral; one simple prayer of gratitude was said, one kiss on the white brow, under the fringe of fair silken hair, from Martin, one on the pale lips from Lucy, then the uncoffined body of the sweet babe was tenderly laid in the grave, the earth displaced was replaced, and nothing but a rising of the green grass turf and a waving galaxy of well-tended flowers remained in after days to mark the place of that interment.

The acts of sepulture ended, Lucy and Martin looked up at Nature and the sky, trying not to feel

the loss they did feel but truly did not mourn. Heavenwards they saw more cause for joy and hope. The death-angel, having waited and given them his benediction for farewell, was speeding upwards, his great wings flashing with the fire of triumph. On each side his way was bounded by a long line of angels, waving branches of golden palms. Up, until the living avenue seemed to meet in one dazzling point of light, the invisible pathway went; and up, amid continual chanting and harping, the angel of the company of Azrael wended his way, bearing his burden of a baby-soul. As soon as the orange-winged being flew by them the waiting spirits—many of them orange-winged too—followed in procession, a wonderful multitude, celebrating the passage unto Heaven of that first flower of the new world. Martin and his heart-companion watched until all the angels—except Zuron and Triest, who remained for consolation's sake some time on the world—had disappeared from sight; and then, seeing the sun was past the place of noon, they knelt and said the usual noontide prayer and went about their businesses.

For some little time the gap made in their life was felt, but because they missed the interest lent by their seven-month-old darling they clung more closely to each other. God, in His ineffable wisdom, soon sent new comfort. In the next spring a son was born, and new infantile joys lived in their home. All the sweetness which the first baby had brought to them was repeated and even excelled, for their past experience with the sainted little one supplied a background of relief accentuating the brightness and joy of the new possession.

The years went by in the uneventfulness of peace and perfection. Three springs had come and gone since the passing of their first-born, and still Lucy and Martin were sinless and untempted. Every year had been a golden one with general development in all things ; and every spring a baby had been born.

Meanwhile, it was not difficult for the happy pair not to sin, considering the seeming lethargy of those whose object it was to injure that paradise. But Satan was not lethargic : far from it. He and his evil brood never cease from ill-wishing and evil-doing. They had long since discovered the bourne where Martin with his bride were stationed. Bad angels scoured space until the solitary sun and the attendant solitary planet were found. The first wish of the devil-world had been to invade and endeavour to destroy the purity of that estate at once ; but spite waited on cunning. Satan knew that in the first flush of enthusiasm Martin's soul would be an unconquerable fortress. Hell's policy was therefore to wait until time had dimmed the impressions gained from the sojourn in Heaven, and blunted the edge of his moral determination.

Martin and Lucy were keen as ever to keep faithful to the responsibility on them. The details of their daily life were continual reminders of the practical aspect of their charge, and frequent converse with angels—in which guidance was sought and given on points of principle and future policy—kept bright their spiritual ideals. But the lapse of time did cause a growth of confidence in them which might one day be weakness, and Martin especially, having over and over again examined and tested the joints in his moral

armour, became confidently certain of his strength. Indeed, without vanity—for that would have been a sin—or even undue self-confidence, the unspoken idea grew in his mind that Lucy would be the tempted one, just as, in the beautiful old legend of the other world, Eve had been the first object and victim of the serpent's malice. Lucy, in her sweet humility, also thought that she would be the one to be first assailed, and she trembled in her prayers. Martín further assumed that if his dear wife—there was no fear in this solicitude—were not the one to be particularly tried, the children would be the chosen fruit for the devil's snares, so from the genesis of their consciousness, their ways had to be guarded and their actions trained, that no habits liable or likely to cause degeneration or selfishness or sin should be suffered to begin. With loving, anxious care Martín took upon himself the responsibility of over-looking the moral welfare of all his dear community as well as of his own, and many a prayer was said by him in the woody fastnesses that Lucy, or the child who might be subjected to the first temptation, should be ready. *He* was ready. He was bravely confident of that. By constant self-examination and holy exercises, he kept his armour bright, and, like the good general, was constantly on the watch, sharing the cares of every sentinel. But time did bring changes. At first he had been eager for temptation to come that it might be overcome; but as the multitude of days travelled harmlessly past and multiplied into years, and still there was no opportunity for his strength to be tried, he ceased to be passionately eager to defeat Satan, and began to take it as a matter of course that the trials would come at a later less-guarded time,

when all and any of his family would be liable to endure them. His first concern, therefore, came to be the strengthening and preparation of the others.

At last the devils arrived. It was a delightful afternoon of freshness and sunshine. There was a sudden mighty noise as of the rending of a great net in one wrathful tear, and simultaneously a breath of ice-cold air—a solitary blast of winter in the valleys of spring—swept through the world. Martin felt awe. From where he was delving, he ran to Lucy, who was bathing her startled children in the river that ran at the foot of the eminence on which their home was built.

“They have come! they have come!” he cried.

“Who?” she whispered, the fear of the invisible in her voice.

“The myrmidons of Satan, or Satan himself, our enemies! They have come! Did you not hear the rending of the web, woven by the legion of Orrin, when first I came here, a warning by which we should know of the approach of evil? Our trial is beginning, Lucy. Now we must be wary and brave, for the sake of our children and their children and this dear world and the confidence of God.”

As he spoke Zuron and Triest flew rapidly up; flaming swords were in their hands, their faces were stern. They knew the tempters were within threatening distance, and had come at once to emphasise the warning given. They were glad to see the family of mortals ready and not afraid. Without pausing longer than was necessary to pass the usual greeting and receive Martin’s assurances of preparedness and safety, they flew away, eager to discover the person-

ality and number of the fiends who had dared to intrude. But although they, with five other angels, who, being in the wide vicinity of the world, had come to know of the circumstance and had flown to Zuron's aid, travelled fleetly countless leagues here and there in the firmament, searching especially along the dreary way that led from that earth to Hell, they discovered no sign of fiend ; for the venturesome intruders, startled by the trap which Orrin had laid for them, and the warning themselves had unwittingly given, had incontinently and with their best swiftness fled.

Hell, waiting in the dawn of new hopes and bad intent, and passionate with malice against all things good, added this one more to its accumulation of disappointments and woe, but a fresh tide of evil determination was soon in flood.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE FIEND'S PRELIMINARY

STILL another year went past, and once more the springtime brought as its sweetest flower a daughter-babe. Martin now had four children—two boys and two girls, each named after an old-world saint or hero. Every accession to the family increased the joys and satisfaction of the parents. To have children was a blessing appreciated. To rear them and tend them, and guide their natural propensities along the proper ways, were duties delightful. Lucy's greatest happiness was in her matronhood. Children were the gifts of God, and to care for them was divine service.

During the whole of this year the mortals were unmolested by the evil ones. At the time of the great warning, Martin had expected them with dread and eagerness. He had trembled—it was not the tremble of fear but of excited expectation—at every fluttering leaf, in case it was devil's footfall. He longed to be tried and tempted, at the same time as he shuddered from contact with the dreadful personality of any one of the host of Hell. Never had he forgotten the face of Kezrel, with its expression of livid hate; and, in his day-dream pictures of the tempters—in

which day-dreams every one of their subtle schemes was triumphantly overthrown—he gave them countenance similar to that cruel one. But day after day went past, without any angel other than God's visiting him; and slowly, gradually, the great haunting expectation, which held him immediately after Orrin's web was broken, faded away.

Satan bided his time. Every day, by increasing the confidence and the want of guard of the hated mortals, assisted him in his work, and made more secure his prospects. There is no need for haste in the realms of Eternity. God can wait aeons for a design to be fulfilled. Satan takes little heed of the flight of earthly years when a bad purpose is to be wrought. It is Man, Man only, whose fragment of time is measured into days, and whose little length of days is apt to be suddenly shorn by the shears of death, who frets and worries because small ambitions and foolish hopes cannot be immediately accomplished. The evil master, however, could not conceive the strong fortress which goodness is, for what had he known of goodness during those myriad years which had travelled by since he rose against the King and Kingdom of it? Owing to his triumphs over moral weaklings, and his quick forgetfulness of the defeats endured by him and his emissaries—for in Hell, as elsewhere, they strive not to remember what it suits them to forget—Satan had lost his original conception of the strength of holy excellence, and he saw in Martin and Lucy only a foolish twain inevitably his victims.

As unpreparedness is ever a fertile soil for evil, Satan determined that he would give good oppor-

tunity for the acute readiness of Martin and his wife to rust into unreadiness, so the unsullied years were allowed to move by. Satan bided. The fact of sinlessness and of untroubled happiness did cause the waiting danger to be forgotten; but there was no rusting into unreadiness, for all that. The mortals were always mindful of their responsibility. They merely ceased to be feverishly expectant and to see fiends lurking behind every bush; their consequent gain in confidence was not a weakness.

At last, both Martin and Lucy, separately, became aware of unseen subtle presences being thereabout. This meant angels, but not good ones; for Heaven's beings could be nowhere without benefit resulting from their neighbourhood—the flowers and trees would immediately be still more generous of sweetness, the birds would sing livelier and more delightful songs, while added brightness would prevail generally. None of these evidences of the true angels' presence were apparent, however: there was instead a lowering of the mood of Nature boding ill. A sense of danger, a dread of threatened unpleasantness, a feeling of repulsion against a vague something—so different from the attraction experienced when God's spirits were there—entered the hearts of man and woman, and put questions into their minds. They drew close to each other, and, filled with parental solicitude, gathered their children together within the home nest, and tried to dismiss the prevailing tension with laughter and play-words, and the *camaraderie* of family love.

Throughout the night the sense of evil hung about them. Although prayer-time caused sweeter in-

fluences to bear, Martin and Lucy, in the dreams which imperfect sleep brought to them, had shadowy visions of the dangers threatening. Their sleep-sense put into form what had been vagueness in the day. It may have been that through the means of dreams the guardian angels were giving an additional warning; for both Martin and Lucy, separately, in their sleep, saw the form of an evil spirit, dark, but robed in flames, stalking silently through their favourite places and cursing all the sweetness with glances of wrath and envy.

After a restless night of foreboding dreams, Martin and Lucy awoke troubled. But the rising glory of the morning, the simple matins which together they said, and the various loving cares of their day's life soon drove the terrors of the night from them; and with strong confidence they waited the coming of the angels, good or bad. Martin counselled Lucy to be wary. He still thought she would be the one to be especially tried. With a smiling kiss she gave his fears fit answer. Then Martin strode off resolutely for a wide round of visitation and work, his spade—not of flint now, but of hard wood, fashioned with acquired cunning—on his shoulder, his strong, erect figure clad in the brown cassock which he had worn in the monastery and since, and which, in that sinless state, like the garb of the Israelites in the wilderness, did not wear out. His head, with its rich covering of dark-brown hair, wore a wreath, placed there sportfully by his young heir. His eyes were as bright as ever—shining with the same light they had always owned—but the expression of restless longing once in them was gone; in its stead there shone the

confident light of resolute command. It was the same Martin, the same idealist, who had hungered for useful activity in the monastery garden, but a free man now, matured, experienced, with the passion for responsibility and work gratified. In his bearing he represented masculine strength; truly he looked a king of men, the completed man, fit father of an excellent humanity.

Before he entered the belt of trees which would hide him from the eyes of those at home, he turned and stood, waving his right hand. His eyes lingered lovingly upon the picture before him. On the eminence—flowers at their feet, and flowers of earth and of Heaven behind them—stood his world's first family. Lucy, whose always transcendent beauty was actually riper and more perfect, was holding up the baby, ineffectually endeavouring to direct the little one's glance towards her father. The golden-haired eldest boy, a chubby rascal, full of energy and brightness, held by each hand his sister and brother,—toddling mites, who blew kisses and waved their free hands with excited fervour to the father. The little ones wore milk-white woollen garments made beautiful with flowers. Ruddy-haired Lucy, the smiling, queenly mother, was in shimmering green. It was a sweet sight which Martin gazed upon: one inspiring his happy pride.

Another personage also was gazing at the group—an invisible angel, not from God; the innocent beauty of the simple picture wrought an agony of anger within him. His gazing grew to a glare. A frenzy of wrath seized him. He turned suddenly, and, raging, flew on passionate wings here and there about the

world whose destiny he, with his brethren, was bent on ruining. All the lovely things he passed were ugly and hateful to his diseased sight. Everything pure and beautiful is poison to the poisonous.

As Martin journeyed workwards, the passion to keep the trust swelled, keen as ever, within him. The sight of that peaceful home, combined with the sense of spiritual danger, roused the dormant eagerness to meet the devils: he longed to be tempted, to subdue whatever inclinations to sin might be placed within him. He tried to conceive of his world as it would be ruined—but there was no use in imagining that; he brushed the possibility aside: with God's help and the angels' he would preserve his Paradise! Hopefully he went the long round of his various duties.

He was returning home just before noon. The sun was hot, and the shade of the glades was grateful. The song-birds called, and he whistled, mimicking their calls; he had learnt that art of the forester. He knew wild-life and all its ways now, well. There was not a nest of any of the birds which he could not discover with a very little search; he had the woodlander's faculty for knowing where all the creatures dwelt, and could detect the presence of an animal in the thickest covert by signs which only the naturalist loving nature can read. The haunts and habits, instincts and virtues, of each of the animals and birds of his rural kingdom were known to him well. He had learnt their ways with loving enthusiasm, and as his knowledge of those branches of life increased, he found more and more cause to reverence and admire the wisdom and beneficence of God.

## THE FIEND'S PRELIMINARY 179

He heard a sweet voice singing, and listened. That was an angel-voice! No human one could be so sweet. But was it a song of Heaven? He could not tell. It was the first time he had ever been uncertain about such a fact. Then he saw the singer, an angel, flying on golden wings through the green avenues towards him. Martin looked at the approaching being wonderingly. There was real beauty and splendour — more than splendour, magnificence—in that form. The face, which shone as if it gave forth light, was gentle and smiling. The spirit held in his hand a silver rod with which as he approached he touched the hot and thirsty flowers, but they—sensitive though they are to loving caresses—did not raise their heads and open their petals refreshed. Instead, they trembled and shivered, as though disappointed and frightened. Martin was perplexed. Despite the magnificence of the angel, and his smiles and kindness and song, despite his angelic mien and ways, there was that missing which marked God's followers; yet Martin was so fascinated by his presence and manners and the melody of his voice that he hesitated to judge him bad.

The unknown alighted by Martin and raised his hand, giving the benediction of Heaven.

Martin bowed his head at the sound of the well-known words; but while the angel was speaking his doubts revived, and he trembled lest the saying of that benediction should be a blasphemy.

"Hail, mortal!" said the mysterious one, "I have heard so many accounts of your goodness and felicity from my angel-brethren, and the beauties of this

fortunate world have been so glowingly painted by the heavenly witnesses of it, that I have come from my station on a far-distant sphere to see you, and the kingdom which is yours."

Martin was in much doubt. Was this friend or enemy? Were his words lies or truth? Had he the power to give God's blessing, or was he one of Hell's legion? Uncertain how to answer, he made no answer; and the angel, in a voice of kind rebuke, said softly:

"Have you no welcome, mortal, for me? I am one of your well-wishers; and fought for you on that memorable day when Zuron and his little band were surrounded by the destroyers." Martin's ear found pleasure in the gentle voice.

The spirit did not say actually on which side he fought on that memorable day. His words held a double meaning, as does every truth spoken by devil-mouth. The devils know that when there are two meanings in any words the generous heart accepts the kindlier.

"Have you come from Heaven?" asked Martin, abruptly.

The angel appeared astonished. "Aye," he said, almost angrily, "I have come from Heaven." This too, was, in the letter, not a lie.

"And seen Broon?" Martin was always yearning after Broon.

"Yes, I have seen Broon, and all my brethren in that blessed place."

"Will he visit me one day?"

"Yes, mortal, Broon will come."

"Will you, when you return to Heaven, tell him I



remembered him, and should like to meet him here?"

"Gladly, when I return to Heaven."

"I long so much to see his dear face and to hear his voice again. All the angels of Heaven that I have seen I have loved and love: but of that glorious host, Broon I love best."

"We all love Broon," said the visitor sagely; and then angel-like he sang and touched the flowers and trees with his silver-white wand, but the music did not seem quite true to Martin, and the flowers and leaves were certainly not exceedingly refreshed by the caresses they received. What birds there were in the vicinity had hushed their voices. Did they know that one was there who would not have delighted in their melodies? It may be so: Nature has a wisdom beyond the wit of men in some respects. Martin remained silent also. He was now almost sure that this being, despite his beauty and semblance to the celestial ones, was not from Heaven; and yet, such is the character of innocence, such the contradictoriness of the generous heart, he could not ascribe to this inoffensive visitor the name of fiend. He thought of Kezrel suddenly, and swiftly he flashed a glance at the new angel. The comparison gave him a false security. Between the terrible visage of that first-met fiend, with its plainly writ expression of devilish hatred and pain, and this shining, smiling countenance, resemblant in many respect of the faces seen in Heaven, there was no similarity—there was the widest difference. It was a puzzle and a mystery to the sweet-minded man. Innocence was preparing the judgment-seat for its own trial. Martin, on an

impulse, determined to greet the angel with kindness, similar to that extended to Triest and the others from Heaven who had come to him.

"Welcome!" he said warmly. The visitor, after one keen look at the man's frank face, smiled in acknowledgment, and then the two paced together towards the home.

"Mortal, you are fortunate!" the angel said, as he looked here and there, up and down the blissful garden. "There are parts of Heaven hardly lovelier than this; and as for the other worlds, they are wretched, bare, melancholy, hideous in comparison. You are indeed God's favourite. The very archangels have been honoured less than you. Not one of them, nor any mortal other than you, has been selected from out of humanity, carried from human estate to Heaven, and then been transferred to so joyous a Paradise as this."

"God has been very good, and I should be very humble," said Martin, gratitude warm in his heart. "I thank you, angel, for reminding me."

Martin did not see on the spirit's face the transient frown which followed those artless words.

"That is right," said the angel, frankly and confidentially. "Never forget your responsibility, and never cease to remember the honour associated with that. Picture the life in your old monastery, and compare it with the glad days here. There you were a tyrannised underling. Here you are a monarch, governing all things. I know that monastery well. I have spent many profitable hours there and in similar houses. The angels—my brethren—often visit those holy abodes—holy, I mean, in human eyes.

We know the real value of that holiness, you, I, and the angels. Compare the inner life of those places with the state of things here. How mean and objectless that other existence, with its fretful fulfilment of little details, does seem, when placed by the side of the splendid purpose here. What the monks do during their working days is largely waste of temper and effort and time. In the eyes of us spirits it is little more than the acting of nonsense, and what are the hymns they are always chanting but the thoughtless repetition of certain noises, and the prayers they are always stuttering and muttering, and shrieking and mumbling, but words—frozen words—mere words."

Martin's doubts were alive again. This was no angel's speech. It was the tone more than the matter of the utterance which made him suspicious.

"There is none of that mummary here," the immortal continued, "any more than there is aught of the squalor and sorrow that afflict other worlds in this sweet repetition of Paradise. No, and why? Angels know the reason. It is because you were really holier than your fellows."

"No, no," said Martin, frightened.

"I am but telling you what the angels say. This truth is no secret in Heaven, I assure you. You were holier than your fellows not only on that other world but on all the inhabited spheres, and for that reason, God selected you. You are God's favourite: that too is no secret. Throughout existence you are famous, and your name is mentioned in Heaven, in Hell, perhaps in Hades, who knows? I have heard that the inmates of Satan's realm writhe with more agony

— the poignant agony of added jealousy — because you, a young mortal, have such joy, while they, the ancient immortals, endure most awful and hopeless woe. Even in Heaven, angels—my brethren—have transient punishment because they — ah, even we — are not unenvious of the favour shown to you.”

Martin looked earnestly at the speaker. It was impossible to believe that this last assertion was a truth, and yet almost equally impossible to him to believe that any word coming from the lips of that frank and pleasant spirit, who had all the aspect of an angel, could be a lie. In any case, the words only gave him horror. There was no fluttering of joy in his heart as he listened to them.

“Yes, it is true. Why do you doubt me? Am not I from Heaven? and do the angels—dare the angels—lie? It is all truth. Do you not recognise, by looking at this lovely world, what a favourite you are? God would forgive a big sin to you, if you expressed your sorrow and shed penitent tears soon after it was done, but with the celestial ones He is inflexible. Even for an unwise thought they have to suffer the pains of long punishment. Have not you heard of the penalties of Heaven?”

“Yes, Broon told me.”

“And Broon, dear Broon, told you only the sweeter tales of Heaven. There is an universe of truth—hard truth of the life of the lesser celestial ones — which Broon was prudent enough not to tell you.”

“Then I do not desire to hear it,” said Martin stoutly, turning a stern face to his companion. At once his doubts and resentment were disarmed by the beaming countenance and kind appearance

of the spirit, and he flushed for his inhospitable words.

"Nor do I desire to tell you anything that is not for your good. Where Broon was silent it is not for me to speak. Broon is very wise. He is higher than I am in the confidence of our King!"

"Forgive me for my hasty utterance!" cried Martin.

"There is nothing to forgive," answered the other sweetly, "and if there were, I and every other angel would forgive anything and everything to the favourite of God. But show me your world. Here is the very poetry of life—magnificent simplicity! What a wealth of flowers! What luxuriance of trees! What a multitude of birds, but how few songsters!"

"No," cried Martin quickly. He was proud of his kingdom. "There are very many songsters. I cannot account for their silence now. Sometimes they are silent. They sing when they please. Perhaps it is the uncertainty of their singing which increases the joy derived from their songs."

"Perhaps so. It must be so. What a world of peace this is! Why, Heaven has not the restful silence that abounds here. Ah, mortal, how the wretches enduring the eternal sorrows of Hell would like to exchange their lot for this! After Hell—this! It would be tenfold—a thousandfold—Paradise to them."

"They have only to repent," murmured Martin, "and they would be forgiven."

"Of course"—there was sadness or scorn in the angel's quiet voice—"they have only to repent!"

Just then the two appeared within sight of the

home. Lucy and her children were not there. With all-seeing eyes the angel inspected everything. He was loud in admiration and praise. Martin went to the trees adjacent to gather fruit for his visitor's entertainment.

"Have you yet seen a devil?" asked the angel on his return.

"Yes, I have," and he shuddered. "So long as I remember anything I shall remember the face of Kezrel."

"Did it frighten you?"

Martin shuddered again. That was all the answer he felt at the moment able to make.

"Evil is very ugly," murmured the spirit. "Only what is good is beautiful."

"It must be so," agreed Innocence. "Kezrel's countenance was worse than very ugly. His eyes flashed with hate, his glances blasted. His face was yellow with cruelty and evil. I shall never forget it while I live."

"And all the devils look like that. I have seen many of them. They cannot appear other than Kezrel then appeared. The existence they endure stamps their wickedness upon them. Their countenances are marked with the ineffaceable brand of Hell. Wherever they go, under every visible condition, at once, infallibly, you can detect and identify them. Evil and evil-mongers cannot be beautiful."

Martin acquiesced with an approving silence.

"Then, also, in the aerial battle which surged around you, when we were triumphant and the forces of Hell were happily overthrown—you saw them then, did you not?"

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"I saw a multitude of evil shapes, but the vastness and the horror of the battle practically blinded me. Seeing so much, I saw nothing. It was all a dazzling, fiery tumult. No, when I think of an enemy he always in my mind has the face and appearance of Kezrel. There is always in his eyes the same glare of baffled hate, and the same look of devilish energy impotent. On that battle-day, Satan, the greatest of them, was prominent before me, but the excitement and terror I was in dimmed my acceptance of his features. I had an acute perception of Kezrel's face, but Satan's appearance, whatever it was, hideous or otherwise, was shrouded with majesty."

Just then the angel, in his keen and curious investigation, touched one of the flowers from Heaven. He sprang back, the expression of pain flashed over his face. For the moment he was the fiend exposed, with foul-ribbed wings and a presence of fire. Martin did not see the instant, and only instantaneous, transformation. He was occupied looking and calling for Lucy, whistling a bar of melody—from one of her songs—to attract her attention. When he turned the angel was cautiously peering into the domicile.

"I am glad to see," he said, "you have made a little wooden cross. Never forget the significance of that simple symbol! Prayers said before that are always more acceptable to God."

Lucy then appeared, her toddling family laughing and playing around her. "What a beautiful woman!" said the angel.

"Aye, and better even than beautiful—perfectly good."

"I see she is. Goodness is always beautiful, and

beauty good. What joy you have—fortunate monk!”

Martin ran towards his wife, and, delighting in the paternal pride, raised two of the children to his shoulders, where they sat and kicked and crowed triumphantly. While doing so, he told Lucy of the new celestial one waiting.

She went quickly forward, hospitably intent. The angel advanced to meet her. His appearance was more radiant than ever, and no being, earthly or celestial, could have worn sweeter smiles.

Lucy stopped. Intuition probed the disguise.

“You are no angel,” she cried. “You are no angel of God! Begone—begone!”

“Dear mortal, you mistake——”

“Begone—begone!” Her voice, her look, her gesture were those of majesty and command. She was the very expression of the true-born queen. In her voice was a scorn of evil.

The devil vanished. Lucy fell on her face, trembling, weeping, praying. The temptations had begun! Their trials had come! Martin hushed the frightened children, and raised and kissed his wife. His heart was abashed and humbled. He had been deceived.



## CHAPTER XV

### AN ANGEL OF WOE

DURING the remainder of that day, and the wakeful night which followed it, Martin was thinking of the interview. As he lay on his couch he stared at the lighted flowers which gleamed through the leafy ceiling of the dwelling-place. Again and again his active brain pictured the details of that experience. Throughout the day, whatever task or duty he was doing—even in his prayers—the fact that he had been in intimate and familiar converse with one of the family of tempters came forcibly to him. He was haunted by thoughts of the danger he had been so near to, and repeatedly, with occasional fear-chilled heart, examined the various sayings on both sides to see whether he had not lost virtue, and perhaps been tempted into a vain thought or word which could not have been pleasing to God. Then, beyond these speeches, loomed the knowledge of his weakness. Actually that morning, in full self-confidence, he had warned Lucy against the enemy: yet she had detected the fiend at once, while he had been deceived.

He had day-dreams of defeat. He ached with trepidation lest he should be trapped. His fertile

imagination kept him in a valley of terror. His armour, he realised, had not been perfect. His generous nature had been successfully worked upon. It was evidently not enough in dealing with evil spirits to have the innocence of the dove. The wisdom of the serpent also was required. How he had been fooled! How wrongly simple he had been! To take a smile for virtue and a charming presence for goodness! As he thought of the infamous, audacious lies of the devil, he trembled and quaked lest, because he had not denounced them, he had sinned.

With the new vision quickened in him by the incident, he reviewed the acts and policy of that evil one. He realised the double meaning—the devil's truth—in every sentence said. How mean those various sentiments now appeared! Then he reflected on the praise he had received. God's favourite! The cause of envy in Heaven! What had been the tempter's object for that impudent adulation? Was it to sow an evil confidence that he might sin and, because of this supposed especial divine favour, pass unpunished, or with merely a mild rebuke? If that were the object, it was a cunning one. But surely the cunning would have outdone itself. It was too bold. God's favourite! Only a devil would suggest that the Ruler of Existence, the Maker of the worlds, the Monarch of Heaven and its invincible legions, should change the working of His designs, and the justice of His plans, for the sake of a small mortal, who would have failed to fulfil the injunctions laid by Divinity upon him. How blind he had been—for the hundredth time he murmured—not to have detected the fiend's duplicity.

He prayed with agony in his heart that such blindness should not be an infringement of that ideal course of life which he had attempted to practise. His blindness had been through innocence. That was the best plea his heart could put forward. Innocence was a strength and a virtue, innocence alone might be a weakness, surely innocence could not be the basis of sin! Nevertheless, with tears and severe self-upbraiding, for he was very angry with himself, he wandered alone, thinking and praying, in the forest. He gave himself the penance which every noble and sensitive heart lays on itself when an ideal has been carelessly or foolishly endangered. His penance was very real, although no actual scourge was used. Conscience and an imaginative mind supplied all the scourge needed for a more than salutary course of painful self-punishment.

All through the remainder of that day, and during the night which followed, Martin was enduring the bitter education of remorse. Then it was Lucy who salved his sorrow, and began the restoration of his confidence and hopes. She was an angel to him, as woman always may be in man's darkened hours. Martin had thought that he knew her perfectly, but that day and night brought new revelation to him of her worth. Those hours of suffering, soothed and subdued by her wise sympathy, had as one effect, that they broadened and deepened the great love which bound the mortals. More than ever now was their marriage-pledge a bond of Paradise. She had brought balm to his fearsome heart. She had done woman's own work.

Zuron appeared with the dawn. He hearkened

anxiously to Martin's account of the experience, and gave comforting advice to both of them. Martin was conscious, as soon as he was with Zuron, of the differences between the good angel and the bad. The enemy had shone with apparent magnificence, but all else about him was now found to be not celestial. He was a golden imitation, a very beautiful fraud, while Zuron was a golden, very beautiful truth. Zuron shone with unconscious splendour enhanced by goodness. Martin was surprised that he had been so easily hoodwinked; there were innumerable evidences of difference between the spirits. All that was excellent in Nature seemed to respond to Zuron's influence and to gain additional excellence from being near him, while of the false one the instinct of the world had not approved.

Martin renewed confidence and knowledge, regained joy and moral strength from that interview; and all the while was judging and comparing the inherent glory and effective virtue of God's angel with the luminous disguise of Satan's.

After the happy meeting Zuron went away again. It was not God's design to interfere with the free will and unfettered opportunity of man. Except at certain joyous moments the angels remained hidden in invisibility; but they were not far absent.

There was again a sustained pause in the duel between Satan and the humanity of that young world. Time elapsed before Martin was once more faced with spiritual danger. Meanwhile, he kept on intelligent guard, and was nervous to keep the trust. He worked at his wide garden and laboured at the history, gaining moral strength as well

as comfort and happiness from both the occupations.

All the angels who spoke with Lucy and Martin were hopeful of the trial which man on that world was enduring and to endure. Zuron and Triest and the others, in all their warnings to the mortals, never expressed a word of fear as to the future. They were certain that goodness would win. The ideals of Martin and Lucy were high; they had a strong love of righteousness, with devotion to God; they knew the evils which sin brought in its train and which they had no desire nor reason but to avoid; they were ripe with helpful experience; and Martin had enjoyed the ineffable privilege of sojourn in Heaven. Satan had, therefore, in the angels' eyes, a difficult task if the fabric of human sinlessness on that world was to be destroyed, but there was no certainty—there could be no certainty—that Hell would always be foiled. Strong as Martin and Lucy and their children through circumstances were, they had facing them an enemy of wondrous cunning and device, who, baffled, would return, and return again, and still again, until he and his had tried every evil art and been forced to abandon every hope of victory. The duty on Man was not on that first family alone. It would lie on all men until that world's long life was done. No human state yet founded had entirely withstood Hell's continuous efforts, but here was one launched by God, bearing a brave ideal, challenging Hell. To soil that world and spoil the ideal therein expressed would be the fierce endeavour of the enemies. It was very necessary, therefore, that every temptation should be successfully resisted and every stratagem of iniquity overcome. The peril was great, but there was no

reason why in that life it should prevail. In all spiritual combats pure righteousness wins. Christ's power is a power triumphant. The complete victory of God is, in the end, certain.

In the duel begun and impending between the champions of Hell and the small colony of mortals on that solitary world, the community of angels had no doubt but that innocence, unselfishness, and faith in God, would win.

One autumn afternoon, Martin, after unusual long-sustained labour, in that part of the forest where fruit-trees predominated, was returning homeward slowly. He was very weary, and because he carried a heavy basket of selected fruit was glad occasionally to rest. While he did so he mused, and Lucy or his mission was the invariable subject of his meditation. His mental occupation did not distract his eyes from the living facts around him, and with quiet attention he watched the birds fluttering and playing about him, as they pecked at the ripe fruit fallen and in the basket, twittered, hopped and chirruped at his feet, and impudently perched on his shoulders and knees.

Suddenly every one of the birds flew frightened away. Martin could not at the moment realise any motive for their flight, and yet he knew that something was not well. He sat up intent and listened. Yes, a voice—a sad voice, and the sound of sorrow and weeping. He heard it distinctly. It was a new sound for that world. What could it mean? He would soon find out. If it were another temptation, as was probable, he would at once face and denounce the evil one. Leaving the basket of fruit on the hillock where he had been resting, he crept cautiously

towards the place of lamentation. He soon reached the spot, and peering through a tangled thicket saw the sorrowful one. It was, as he expected, a devil; but not such a devil as he had expected. There was no sparkling splendour about this one, nor any of that activity of fiery wrath which had made the personality of Kezrel memorable and dreadful. Instead, there was a broken spirit, crouched in an agony of sorrow. It was impossible for all-loving Martin to hate so obviously wretched a being, and yet it was a devil, and all devils were to be shunned and detested. He waited and watched for an appreciable number of minutes, thinking what it was best to do.

He had never before seen so pathetic a picture as was then framed by the green thicket in front. There, at full length on the ground, in a circle of dead grass and withered flowers, an evil angel was lying. His wings spread out were emphasising his sorrow by a series of rhythmic beats; as they flapped against the ground they wafted forth a faint unpleasant odour which did gradual mischief to the plants it came to. His dark form, gleaming dully with a suggestion of flame, shook again and again with the tumult of weeping. His face was hidden in his arms and kept close to the ground. Every now and then his form and wings trembled and quivered with a sudden excess of agony. He was indeed a picture of despair! Martin forgot his own fears, a flood of sympathy surged through him. Still he did nothing but hide in the thicket and watch that sacrifice of pain. Now and then he looked round, but there was no living object near; the birds had quite disappeared, and if there were animals there about they had gone to

their places. The loneliness made him strangely nervous. There was something eerie in being the solitary spectator of the woes of that writhing fiend.

After a while—a while to Martin haunted with various distressful thoughts and harassing doubts—the dark angel's lamentations became articulate. Martin, distinctly, in the midst of a laboured torrent of undistinguishable language, heard one name twice or thrice repeated, "Peruel! Peruel!"

Peruel! What did that name bring to him, from the well-filled vista of the past? Peruel! Yes, it brought a sense of hope combined with sorrow, of pity wedded to proud aspiration. Peruel! Clearly before his vision appeared the face of the distressful angel, who, as in the proud procession he passed him long ago, was endeavouring passionately to beat his way through the sacred area to Heaven. Peruel! Was this that same angel who, having abandoned his desperate quest, was seeking vain harbourage on this unsullied world; or was it another devil, similarly circumstanced in regret and woe, who had not the force nor patience to compel an entrance into Heaven, but who hoped by passing through a probation on that fresh young world to qualify for re-entry into the kingdom and service of God?

There was no fear of temptation from this crushed spectacle of misery. Martin's doubts were banished. The angels had given help and sympathy to him: was it not his duty to give help and sympathy to this most troubled wretch? Characteristically, he sprang to a swift decision. He forced a passage through the thicket—thorns clung to his clothing and pierced his hands and feet, but in his hot anxiety to be of service



he did not heed them—and addressed the prostrate being :

“Angel,” he said, “can I help you? Can I in any way salve your misery?”

The dark one sprang to his feet and folded his wings, alarmed. Martin’s heart was melted at the sight of the pitiful face. What woe was pictured there! Human tears, penitence and remorse, are little more than nothing in comparison to the tears and remorse of the repentant angel ; the sympathetic man to whom most facts were clothed in a mist of sweet illusion, saw all the pathos there. Oh, the mute pleading in those eyes, and the shame eloquent in that countenance! It seemed as Martin stood and pitifully looked at him, that the devil was conscious of his livery and would hide his incongruous remorse, for, clasping and wringing his hands in a paroxysm of grief, he raised his dark red wings and spread them above him, so that their tips met, shading his face and its sorrow-burden. For a silent while the two stood and faced each other. Each seemed to wait for the other to speak, each seemed to dread the trial of spoken words. So they stood and waited in almost horrid silence—the man tall, erect, with sympathy and kindness alive in his countenance ; the immortal proud and majestic, just as a ruined castle can be proud and majestic, but dark and trembling, as if constantly flame-tortured.

A little bird in the distance began to warble. His innocent notes broke the haunting silence. Martin felt more freedom. The tension was relieved, but the devil spoke first. He answered Martin’s previous question in a very sad voice.

"You can help—if you will."

"It is my duty to help you."

The wretched one stood for a little while gazing with solemn eyes straight into the face of Martin, as though estimating the character and judging the capacity of the man. Then folding his wings, he spoke:

"You see in me the most wretched of beings. No inmate of Hell has greater agony, because, beside the active pains of that awful place, I endure a remorse which no other spirit can feel more acutely. Gladly—gladly would I exchange my lot for that of the most hopeless and despondent member of the universe-wide races of men. However wretched that pitiful one is, I would gladly exchange my lot and destiny for his. I am immortal, and I am eternally doomed; but he, even in the depth of his debasement, can hope."

As he made this avowal, tears welled into his eyes. But with an apparent effort he controlled himself and continued:

"A weary time ago—ah! how weary time is in Hell! how weary is eternity to those in agony!—I had a chosen companion, Peruel. We fought by each other's side in that great battle when Satan first raised the banner of rebellion against God. We fell together, and always in our agony we were near each other; we echoed each other's groans and knew each other's sorrows. That sympathy in pain between Peruel and me was the only satisfaction I ever knew in Hell.

"Hell!" a weight of feeling was in his voice, as he repeated the dreadful name. The flames which clothed him, sprang into vividness, flickered about

his being and licked his face, till he cried with a broken cry because of their caresses. "Hell! the ever present, never-ceasing punishment of Hell! Satan did his followers a gross disservice when he robbed us of Heaven, and founded that nether dominion where in boasted freedom we are never free! He is a royal ruler, and a multitude of spirits is loyal and devoted to him; but the price that we must pay to do him service is a big, big price—it would buy Heaven twice if the self-sacrifice and agony, the obedience and pain, given and suffered for Satan's sake were transferred from his service to God's. But that is impossible—impossible! Hell!"—his passionate voice rang out—"Fortunate man, you have no idea of the inner iniquity and diverse agonies of that lost kingdom. Hell's torments are manifold—brain and heart and soul, as well as body and limbs, are ever conscious of a multitude of afflicting pains. One's every atom throbs with bitter fire. There is no rest in Hell, no sleep, no forgetfulness. Agony and hate of goodness are ever with us, and a fearful pride!" The devil shuddered violently, and then continued in words of terrible distinctness. "The fiend who expresses a word of dissatisfaction with his fate, or of dissent from Satan's fixed and absolute plan, is chased and beaten by angry devils through the fiery vaults, and then fastened with festering clamps to the burning marl; is tormented with a long-drawn series of tortures, such as only the ingenuity of Hell can invent and her cruelty administer. More than half the pain of Hell is Hell-administered!" The angry flames which were always wreathing round the afflicted spirit's presence again sprang up, illuminating the

passion in his dark face, and blistering the leaves of the over-arching trees.

Martin listened to the burning words with horror and dread. That evil influence so near to him oppressed him—he felt inclined to swoon ; but backing out of the enclosure where they had been speaking he felt relieved. He sat on the trunk of a bended tree—the heavy scent of bruised flowers greeted him—and listened to revelations of the horror-place. He buried his face in his hands and closed his eyes, only to see more clearly the scenes of unholiness described.

“You men—even the dreamers of your race—have no conception of the details of existence in Hell. At its easiest moments, it is far worse than you, according to your limited mortal measures, can imagine. You speak of ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth!’ Weeping and gnashing of teeth there is, but that only tells a fragment of the appalling tale. There are pains which no weeping can pacify, and humiliations which the gnashing of teeth cannot to the millionth part condone. The agonies of Gehenna its victims only can conceive of, and even its victims cannot justly tell.”

“I do not want to hear of them,” cried Martin, looking up ; then, pointing with hasty hand to his world of bliss, he said, “Here is no reason for stories of horror and sin. Let me hear none of them !”

“Will you not help me, then ?” asked the angel, and the words ended with a moan.

“Help you ? yes, if I can ; but a knowledge of Hell is no assistance.”

“It is. You cannot help me without some know-

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ledge of the sorrow I have endured and of my need. The spirit again gave the gesture of despair.

"To hear of pain and suffering is pain and suffering, and a knowledge of Hell is a knowledge of evil, and that must be evil."

"I will not tell you the tenth of a tithe of what I experienced, I will not paint even the shadows of the agony. But, oh, let me at least suggest our woes. For you to listen to that is some of the help you can give me."

Martin made no rejoinder, and the fiend went on.

"In the realm which Satan rules—the only place where the angels of God do not penetrate—Peruel and I and a vast family of sinners suffered. The first aeon spent in that prison was an Aeon of Despair. Stunned by our failure and our loss, humiliated by defeat; in a frenzy of hate against God and Heaven, against Satan and his host, against our fellows and ourselves, we despaired. With all the joys and painlessness of Paradise torn from us, we had instead the continual presence and the unending prospect of bitterness and contempt and ever-racking pain. Around us was angry flame and in our hearts, throbbing through every particle of our being, surged a still angrier blast of unquenchable fire. We were sunk to the deepest depth. Despair oppressed us. Hell was about us. Hell was in us. For a time we endured unresistingly. But ever, without ceasing, our curses—louder than our groans—uprose and uprose. In the long first horrors of doom we shrieked repeatedly to the void above to turn to blessed water and quench our firmament of fire. At last, above the tumult of that prison of pain, we heard a trumpet—

blast pealing through existence, and then the voice of an archangel crying, 'The tears of repentance alone can drown the fires of sin.' That voice with its declaration so calm and so different from the frenzy and passion of our appeals, marked the close of the Aeon of Despair; for in one wide shout the answer of Hell rang up. Unanimously we shrieked—stars new-created shivered at the sound—that we never would repent! Then began the Aeon of Anger; we organised our estate into a kingdom under Satan, with systems of government and grades of princes, similar to, but, oh, how dissimilar from, the institution of Heaven! We could not cope with the agonies that oppressed us; but we found that we ~~could~~ promote a power, and by undoing the angel's work wreak evil and cause pain in the worlds, and all of these deeds remorselessly, with angry delight, we did. We prepared an army which should one day attempt the conquest of the universe, we organised legions and with patience drilled them, we built palaces and made various magnificence. Slowly, surely, though Hell was always Hell, we lost our despondency and worst hopelessness. Then, the Aeon of Anger ended, opened the Aeon of Pride. We found we were not the only victims in the universe, for we had victims too. We still were burdened with undiminished agonies—we never can lose our acute haunting pains and the shame of Hell—the shame of Hell!—but we, Heaven's victims, had victims too! Spirits escaping from Hell's confines, but, alas! ever carrying their part of Hell with them, about their presence and in themselves—here am I, O man, and here with me is my portion of the bitter kingdom!—went among the

worlds and laid traps for the souls of men. The seeds of evil were sown among human habitations everywhere. We reaped a portentous harvest. The souls of rotten mortals is sorry stuff, and we sickened of our gain ; but by that gain Heaven somehow lost, if only because its work was rendered incomplete, and we joyed in our ill-doing and were proud with a hateful pride. But"—again the flames with which he was girdled sprang suddenly into added life and wreathed about him, till his words were shrieked, not spoken—"pain was always with us. All these various Aeons of Despair and Anger and Pride comprised one spacious period of Pain. We suffered—suffered—wrestled ~~always~~ with suffering, and there was ever the falling of tears." The wretched being sank quivering to the ground.

Evening had come, but Martin had not noticed its coming. He was hungry and tired, but he did not heed his hunger and weariness. The beasts and birds were going to sleep. The insects ceased to buzz, and the dews emerged. Lucy was anxiously looking for her husband, but he, unconscious of the flight of hours, still listened to the tale of Hell, his face buried in his hands, and thought. Rapidly the sun sank, the world was golden, then grey, then black with night's blackness. Except for the lurid glow which surrounded and crowned the presence of the servant of sin, darkness prevailed. Lucy sat by her home, waiting. Dread was in her heart, for she could see far away the tinge of the bad light. She would have gone in search of her husband until she found him; but feared to leave the children. Instead, she prayed, and looking at the beaming flowers of Heaven, sparkling

about her home and high in the various trees, gained consolation from their constancy. She had faith in God, in the power of prayer, in Martin, her husband. Throughout the night the sweet wife watched, and prayed.

"Despite this frenzy of lamentation," the devil went on, "the greatest sorrow of Hell was that hidden in our hearts. Although outwardly we braved God and reviled Heaven, in our inmost selves there was real remorse for the momentous step that had been taken. It was fear of each other and an awful pride which prevented every devil separately from sending up petitions that the past might be forgiven, and promises of a blameless future. ~~The~~ tyranny which we all wielded, and under which we all were sunk, prevented such revelations. The more we resisted the calls to repentance, the harder grew our obstinacy, and the more cruel became our pain. We would not repent, and in our ever-angry pride any spirit heard lamenting for his woe, or even mentioning the fact of pain, was punished with such severity and device that Hell was thenceforward ten times more Hell to him. Peruel lamented and Peruel was punished, and still Peruel lamented, until I feared he would repent, so, being his comrade, I increased the volume of my curses and groans, out-bellowing him, and kept him in the lonely places that his weakness might not be discovered.

"As if Hell had not enough agony without the creatures of Satan increasing it! yet they did increase it, yes, and I too, and found pleasure in the practice of spying and pain-giving. It was almost the only voluntary act that we could do and



voluntary satisfaction that we could realise—in Hell! Meanwhile, in a flood-tide of woe the flames periodically surged and swept through that hateful place, and in a similar tide, but worse for us—worse—worse—the agony of remorse swelled in our hearts and then ebbed, until its place was occupied by a sullen woe, and we lay prostrate; motionless, abject, uncomforted by our much magnificence and the palaces we had reared. Then after a time of morbid prostration our energies revived, the outer and inner agonies recurred, and shrieks again made stormy the skies of Hell.

“As we had our periods of weakness and pain, so we knew periods of angry triumph. Our emissaries went among men and damned their souls, and as those blasted spirits were hurled into our abyss, there to be trained by Hell’s wise ones into angry, pitiless enemies of God, we joined hands and, with wings waving, chanted our choruses and danced the dance of Hell’s delight. Oh, how we rejoiced—though in such moments more pains were gripping us—at the reception of those lost souls! As each one, limp and quivering, was hurled into the pit of its woe, we, the multitude damned already, shrieked in union, hoping that our triumphant shout would reach the gates of Heaven and scatter sorrow about the throne of God. But, alas! it did not—it could not do so. The distance between Hell and Heaven which can be traversed by a loving word, is too great to be bridged by an angry sound!

“And yet through that distance from Hell to Heaven Peruel essayed to go. He had been despatched to a star where Hell was very triumphant,

to carry bad dreams to an ambitious king, dreams of spite, painted in blood and framed in a frame of yellow dead bones, which should induce that monarch to sow the seed of an evil among his people. Peruel went alone, yet he dared to disobey—he deserted his trust. The dreams were lost in space. It is so easy for Satan's plans to be made futile! Peruel had gone from Hell not to return; and the ambitious king on that vicious star untempted did virtuous and not evil deeds. The curses of Satan were loud against Hell's first malingerer. The cruellest fiends went in search of Peruel, but although they followed his track past suns and worlds for myriad leagues they could not catch him. Their wings were fleet, but Peruel's, inspired by repentance and terror, were quite as fleet as theirs, and the pursuers did not find him; for a band of angels—how we hated their beauty and puissance!—met the foremost devils, and by force drove them back to the confines of fire. So Peruel, my comrade, fled from Hell, and to this day I know not whether he reached Heaven or is still lurking in a little Hell of his own on some forgotten world; but Satan's realm assuredly knew him no more, and may never know him more."

Martin had it on his tongue to tell the devil of the sight of Peruel, passionately remorseful, battling through the virtuous circle bounding God's place; but with prudence, well-learnt from his lesson of the other occasion, he said nothing; and for a long while there was silence, except for the groans and sighs of sorrow of the angel of sin.

Martin was hungry and very weary—had it not

been for this experience he would long since have been won to slumber—but the pictures of Hell and the existence there, suggested rather than described by the votary of the awful estate, kept his mind in a whirl of excitement. He forgot hunger, and forgot that he was weary, but listened eagerly to the tale, and when his eyes were not covered by his hands watched with burning sympathy the restless, nervous movements of the afflicted spirit.

“One misery that greatly burdened some of us, were the visions of the lost Paradise which visited us. Sometimes in that trough of shame where we wallowed, would appear vivid pictures of the sweet life lost. One or other of the green places of Heaven would shine before us, seemingly lighted with God's light, and so clear that every item in that holy scene was evident and distinct. The shapes of angels moved among the flowers, sweet voices were almost articulate to our straining ears: oft-times in that glistening vision we recognised one or other of the spirits who had been our comrades in bliss, and with shrieks and lamentation frenzied, we would hold out our arms to them and raise our weary wings to fly to them. . . . It was but a mirage—a tantalising vision! The pictures faded, the angelic presences whom our tortured minds had conjured there were gone; in their stead the dark-red pillars of flame rose in waving columns and sent up their burden of poisonous odour and devil's incense. Then we knew the despair of woe. Then in a frenzy because we had duped ourselves, we took the name of God in vain, and in the scorn of despair competed in blasphemy.”

Martin, with eyes sunken with weariness, sparkling

with horror, drawn with sympathy, looked up at the devil, who shone a red figure of flame in the night-dark world, and asked pathetically :

"Does this horrible revelation really help you? Must I hear this tale of awful agony and shame?"

"I do not wish to harass you," answered the evil one, "but, with your experience of Heaven and this perfect life, you could not appreciate my position and my need without at least a suggestion of the woe from which, like Peruel, I have flown. That is why I have told you what I have, but"—with a short laugh of quiet scorn—"that is not a tenth of a tithe of what we must endure. Do you wonder that Peruel preferred to escape, perhaps to endure the misery of restless solitude—always to be flying between two fears, the fear of the wrath of the angels of Hell and the fear of the wrath of the angels of God, and to know no place nor peace, for Heaven is lost and Hell is forsaken, though his portion of pain is always wrapped around and prisoned in him? Do you wonder that from that depth of tyranny I too have flown?"

Martin wearily shook his head.

"No," said the fiend bitterly. "No! Yet, of all that army heroically battling to weave evil in an universe of pain, I am only the second to endeavour to escape, and re-discover Heaven and virtue."

"Only the second!" sighed the tired man.

"Oh, the obstinacy of Hell! That is the vice, a wrong obedience is the virtuous vice, which blocks the way. Let but Satan say one word of penitence to Heaven and every one of that army of sinners would hasten to confess his sin and pray to be forgiven. Let but one of the archangels of the Prince of Hell raise a

virtuous banner of rebellion against our tyrant and the vast majority of his victims would find strength to rise against him ; but they will not do so ! ”

“ They will not do so ! ” murmured the man in echo.

Martin's head was resting on his hands. He only half-hearkened. He was so weary. Through his brain a number of thoughts confusedly were creeping. The terrors of Hell were with him : he saw many scenes of that lost abode, for the picture-faculty of his brain was powerful, but beyond all other ideas this one predominated. It continually impressed itself on his consciousness as it flickered through his mind. A golden opportunity had arisen ! Instead of his becoming a victim to temptation, might not he assist one of the fallen angels to repent and be restored ? That would be an honourable achievement ! That would be a victory for God ! that would be raising a trial into a triumph ! In his half-asleep sense he saw the host of angels rejoicing over this repentant sinner, regained through his means, and his heart grew happy at the prospect. He pictured the scene of triumph at the Golden Gate. He saw Broon there, smiling. He slumbered, sitting, for a long while, his mind being ever at work and then, with a start, awoke. Dawn was already come.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### THE DEVIL WHO WOULD SERVE

THE sorrowful angel was still there. Martin looking up saw him pacing to and fro in a narrow avenue; the near sides of all the trees and shrubs he repeatedly passed were burned and shrivelled, the grass and flowers were withered quite. The devil's influence was very deathful. In Martin's heart arose a dislike of the maker of all that misery. He could not love, however much he sympathised with, a personality whose mere presence occasioned such harm. Although it was the hour of dawn when usually a multitude of bird-voices trilled welcome to the new day, there was nothing but silence there. The only noise—and that but accentuated the extraordinary silence—was the monotonous moaning of the unresting sea. In a sad murmur, that mighty inarticulate voice spoke to Martin, and increased the depression, in which, through want of sleep, want of food, the devil's presence, and the early morning coolness and quietude, he was sunk. He rose to his feet to stretch his limbs.

"I must go to Lucy!" he said, then looking round, as though startled at finding dawn, "I have been here all night! It has been actual, then, and not a

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dream!" A flood of confused ideas surged through his brain. "What does it mean?" Then he remembered: the full import of the devil's story came to him. He turned towards home, perplexed.

"Wait a while," said the dark angel quietly.

"My dear ones will have been expecting me— anxiously."

"No. They have confidence in you. What is there to harm you, here or anywhere on this world? Stay for a little while; bear with me further. I need you; for my sake, stay! God desires His followers to help those who are in sorrow."

It was still early dawn, earlier than Lucy and he usually stirred, and the marvellous silence of the earth deceived him into thinking it still earlier than actually it was. So, with the full intention of returning home as soon as day was entirely come, he acceded to the devil's request, and stayed, waiting to console.

"You feel cold, let us walk," suggested the dark one, and slowly he led the way out of the glade where the night had been spent into the wide avenue. Martin followed thoughtfully. Their footsteps went away from the place where Lucy, still watchful and anxious, was waiting.

"Why this way?" asked Martin suddenly, stopping. "Come with me."

"Not yet—not yet!" said the devil earnestly, as he turned and looked with sad appealing eyes into Martin's face. "I cannot meet any mortal but you—yet; at least until this——" with passionate hand he patted his breast, referring to the pangs of shame here, "until *this* is purged away!"

"There is only Lucy. She has a heart of gold. She is a very real portion of Love. She will soothe you and comfort you. Come with me—come!"

"No, mortal," said the devil firmly. "I cannot come with you, nor meet any one of mankind or angel-kind, while I wear this livery."

"Then we must part," said Martin quietly. "I must return home."

"You would abandon me? Is this spirit worthy of one who has been in Heaven? Would an angel not go with you to save your soul? If need were, he would go through Hades and through Hell to restore a lost penitent. And yet, you would not go just a little way with me, or sacrifice a tittle of your home-happiness to help me to redeem what I have lost. Man! man! this is not well—not well! I tell you again that until by renewed virtue I have lost some of the shame which girds me, I cannot meet any one except you; and I should not have told you my tale, had you not been to Heaven, and there, I believed, received that power of sympathy which marks the angels."

Martin still hesitated. The devil's words and the pleading in his voice appealed to him. No man on any populated sphere was more anxious than he to do the wise kindness; but he had been longer away from Lucy and home than ever before, and he did not like the seeming unwillingness of this dark angel to meet his wife; moreover, he was apt to be cautious now in his dealings with spiritual unknowns. For a brief but measurable period he stood there balancing his decision. A slight influence either way would determine him to go with the devil or return imme-



diately to Lucy. He was weighing the alternatives anxiously. Which was his first duty? To keep with this spiritual penitent and endeavour to win him to God, or leave him to his own devices while he returned to the much-loved home. Which way did duty lie? There was no doubt as to his inclination. He hungered for home.

The balance of his determination was so even and delicate, that a trifle would be strong enough to influence it either way. It was an opportunity for the triviality to become important. At such moments in great men's lives a small idea opportunely born may make or mar a nation. The trifle came, opportunely or otherwise, to Martin, and affected his decision.

Out of a thicket hopped a bird—a bird with a broken wing. It was always a part of Martin's self-imposed work to do what he could to alleviate the pain and remedy the misery of any of the creatures in the world which needed his attention, and they had come to know this. Many a time an animal had limped to him for a thorn to be abstracted from its foot; and still more frequently birds had fluttered to him and to Lucy for physical troubles to be righted. It was, therefore, quite in the proper order of things for Martin, as soon as he saw the obviously crippled bird, to hasten to its assistance. He did so now, anxious to comfort it, and to examine the broken wing; but for the first time on that world, the bird did not wait for him; frightened, it moved its hale wing and hopped more energetically to escape from interference. This new experience impelled Martin to increase his speed. He ran hard through the grass-land, over the hillocks, through the dells, after the

bird, which still, despite its disadvantages, managed to maintain its lead. Now Martin saw that its wing had not been broken, only injured, for it moved both wings, though not with the full energy of health. Martin, his spirits excited by the chase, still pursued the quarry. \* He sprang over rivulets, scrambled through thickets, coursed full-tilt down grassy slopes, made all the efforts of the strong runner; but the winged creature successfully kept its place in advance. At last, piping defiance, with both wings working in full strength, it rose, darted over a group of trees, and disappeared beyond them. Martin threw himself panting on the grass. It had been a glorious run, an enjoyable chase, and he laughed through the joy of sport; but what had possessed the bird to behave in such a manner?

After a while, he sat up, having recovered breath and composure. He was in a part of the woodland which, despite his frequent exploration, was strange to him. For that, however, he felt no concern. He could not lose himself in his own country. But he felt faint and hungry. He looked round for fruit, but there was none; there were many trees, but no fruit trees. Near where he sat was a freshet. He went to it, laved his face and head, and drank of the water; then, rising, he saw the dark angel flying slowly towards him.

"Ah!" sighed the fiend, "I feared I had lost you."

Martin explained: "I followed a bird with a seemingly broken wing, but the creature deceived me: its wing was not broken." The devil laughed and Martin laughed too; but the devil's laughter was as that of one who laughed in agony. "Here I am,

I know not quite where, certainly a distance from my home—I must return there at once.”

“Let me guide you,” said the fiend quietly.

“No,” answered Martin, distrustful of devil-guidance. “I will find my way!”

“I will lead you. Wait while I discover the direction.” Raising his dark red wings, he soared swiftly upwards, and then, poised in the air, looked round him for a few moments. Satisfied, he descended, plumb, as a lark descends until it is near the ground. The ascent and descent were wonderfully swift and direct. Martin marvelled at, and admired the decided and graceful movements of the winged one. “Yes,” said the fiend, on his return to earth. “I saw your home—a green arbour on a hill, decked with flowers and with running water at the base of it. A beautiful woman with little children playing about her was there, talking happily with three of God’s splendid angels.”

“Lucy! You saw my dear ones — and with angels?”

“Yes, with angels. She is not anxious about you.”

“God is good. He sent them to comfort her in my absence.”

“Will you help me to gain His goodness?”

“I will do all I can, with my small ability. I must first go to my loved ones, I have proved my desire to help you. There is ample time for all I can do for you. Do not think I am not willing, but my first duty is to be with them now. The morning is going.”

“You see that tree, whose leaves are like silver with the kisses of yesterday’s sunset still upon them? Your home is directly beyond that.”

"Then let us go. You—come with me!"

"I will go with you part of the journey and be your guide. But I must not meet those angels yet."

"Why not? They are the very ones to assist you! Do you think God's angels would hurt or discourage any penitent? No—I know them too well."

"And I know them well too. If on some sphere where they were alone, I humbled myself in the dust, and shed penitent tears and spoke all that is in my heart—as I have spoken and will speak to you—they would hear me, and, I doubt not, help me towards obedience and God; but here, where you and your family are, they would be suspicious of me. Because I wear the garb of Hell's shame they would judge me as one of Satan's body-guard, seeking to deceive you and destroy. That I am not. Had I been doing devil's work, I should not have said what I have said to you. I am no tempter, nor do I appear as one. I have escaped from Hell, and wish to get to Heaven, and that by worth, and you can help me. I want no angel's assistance yet; shame would keep me from asking them, but I am not ashamed to ask *you*, who have walked in Heaven—the only mortal to do so, and still remain vested in mortality!—and are perfectly good."

"Hush! do not flatter me." A shadow glided over Martin's face. "I am only a weak man trying to realise an ideal."

"I know all that you would say: you are doing your duty, and part of your duty is to help me. I have flown from Hell, as Peruel did; but my purpose has been more definite than that fool's was. In his passionate eagerness to escape from the pain

and the shame below, he flew wildly with blind wings anywhither, his one object being to get away—as far away as possible—from the sink of horrors and sin. Where he is now I do not know. But I had a clear purpose. I came to this world, where there has never been sin, to be your servant, gradually by painful servitude to train my hard spirit to the habit of excellent obedience, and from companionship with you to gain the virtue induced by a pure example. For your sake I will, with my knowledge of Hell's cunning, assist you to baffle and resist the wiles of enemies; and for my own sake, by this probation, holy and patient it will really be, and this service against Hell, I shall hope to win the forgiveness of God, and be enrolled again among His angels!"

Martin's eyes kindled at the prospect, but he said:

"Anything that I can do to regain you for God, and Heaven for you, I will do, even if I die for it; but this is a great responsibility to place on an untried man, and I do not know that I ought to bear it. You must let me do this—consult one of the angels now with Lucy about your plan."

"No, that cannot be!" answered the devil, with something like fierceness for the first time in his voice. But Martin held firmly to his decision. He saw the dangers of the devil's proposed course.

"You need not meet them," he urged. "I will not say where you are; only let me tell them your story as you have told it to me. I have great faith in their justice and kindness."

"Again no—not yet. By your uncertainty—my master!—you belittle yourself." As the devil called Martin "master" there was all the expression of

determined humility in his voice. It was the proud spirit wilful to subdue his pride for the sake of a high purpose. Martin appreciated the hidden struggle which accompanied the words, but he interrupted, saying deliberately, "Call me not master, I am no one's master, but God's man. God is the Master."

"Truly; but—God's man—do you not see my purpose? By voluntary humbling myself to you, I am undergoing a painful penance. It is to gain redemption. Oh, help me—help me!" The words ended in a plaintive cry.

"I will help you all I can. But I want no servant. Our work here is our happiness."

"Is there not much for all of us to do? Can you human habitants of this great sphere attend to a particle of the work to be done on it. I with my power of flight can visit places—where Nature is fully alive—which you will never see. In those places I can be your representative—I the spiritual viceregent of a mortal king—carrying your principles of justice there, and proclaiming everywhere your authority. There is very much for all of us to do. In the circle round your home there is order and loveliness; beyond that circle, as I have seen, is lawlessness and a tangled wilderness. I tell you, man, for the good of your ideal and the proper government of your world, that you need me."

There was anxious pleading in the spirit's voice and eyes. The prevalence of the pain and flames was now evidently less, suggesting to Martin's sympathetic mind that the virtuous ambition and purposes of the devil were already reducing the burden of his sin. Still, the agony was there—as

it always must be in one exiled from Heaven—but for the time it was superseded by a nobler pain—the pain of the knowledge of shame spurred by the resolute wish for the opportunity of forgiveness. Martin said nothing, but was firmly determined to obtain the counsel of Zuron or Triest before consenting to any such act of responsibility.

They had now been walking for some hours, the angel a few paces ahead, but the country was still strange to Martin. This fact puzzled him, as he thought he knew the world within half-a-day's journey of his home thoroughly. He grew troubled and anxious. They were going in a straight line over undulating grassy downs, gay with multitudes of flowers and proud with not a few trees, but none of these were fruit trees. Martin felt his strength failing. At last he sat down exhausted. The hot sun was beaming down from overhead. Noon, and no food for nearly a whole hard-worked day! In accordance with custom he knelt at that hour and prayed; and most prominently did Lucy and the dear children—then performing the same rite and praying for him—figure in his prayers. He seemed so far from them, although he should be near. Where was he? he asked at the end of his supplications. Lost? Lost in his own world!

During the interval of prayer, the devil had been silent; deliberately he turned his back to the kneeling man—scenes of holy exercise were not for him yet. The face of the dark angel, besides its burden of sorrow, bore a smile.

At that moment of direct appeal to God, a very great doubt as to the spirit's genuineness came into the

mind of Martin. Throughout the night and during that morning he had been on careful guard, for he knew that there is no cunning so accomplished, no art so cruel, no design so pitiless, as the cunning, art, design of the soul-destroyer, and this new acquaintance, if not evil now, had been wrought in evil. Yet the agony of the devil during the previous night had not been feigned: Martin had witnessed the sufferings and heard the appalling story of that woeful one. If he were lying now, he had lived the truth then. That was to his credit. Behind all these theories, however, shone like a lurid storm-cloud this fact—the devil had not guided him aright, otherwise ere this he would have been with Lucy. The experience of the night had been passed within easy distance of home, yet, after walking a weary distance through the foodless fields, he was lost. The devil had been worse than a blind guide; he had wilfully deceived. The upward flight had been a subterfuge. The sight of the happy home and Lucy with the angels might as truly as not have been a lie; and the bird—the original cause of his straying into these unknown ways—was that an instrument of evil guile, the tool of an iniquitous purpose; perhaps, indeed, a demon disguised? Martin was in dismay.

The devil read his thoughts, and walking to him said:

"You are in doubt: you doubt me! You judge too quickly. Mere circumstances have too much effect upon you. This is not just nor kind."

"I am lost," said Martin, simply, wearily.

"And think because you are lost that I am a false guide."



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"You professed to act as my guide."

"I am taking you direct to your home."

"I have walked and walked, and still am—I know not where!—not near home."

"I tell you the truth, and have told you no lies. I am leading your footsteps directly homeward."

Martin looked round. To his mind the fact that he was in an entirely strange place was answer enough to the dark one's protestation.

"You followed the bird wilfully. I called to you, advising you to keep in the parts you knew. You would not hearken to my appeals; but rushed, passionately, carelessly, after the feathered fraud. When, you followed the bird did you heed where you were running?"

Martin made no answer.

"No! you ran a great way, further than you, tired as you are, can estimate. When your bird-chase was over, knowing you were a considerable distance from home, I offered to guide you, and have guided you aright. You are not so very far from your destination now, but tired and hungry—dispirited—you have lost faith in yourself; and, like all men, losing faith in yourself, see nothing but evil in others. I am the only other with you now, and so you see in me nothing but an evil spirit and a false guide! This is poor gratitude to one who, anxious to be your servant, is endeavouring even to his own danger—for are not my old enemies, the angels of goodness, hereabout?—to help your wearied footsteps home."

The devil had been speaking with a voice of calm reproach. The skilful utterance and the musical tone touched the heart of the generous man. The

eloquence—angelic eloquence—so glorified the facts that they wore a new semblance. Martin's keen care of avoiding temptation was as alive as ever. He never allowed himself to forget that this being was one of the damned of Hell, and so, even while protesting penitence, to be guarded against—be his words and apparent deeds ever so virtuous. But there was one other ideal which he never forgot—that of helping this sad one to regain the confidence of God. Ever that aspiration was beating at the gate of his heart—at the door of his mind. He, the tempted, to convert the tempter! In the joy of the fond ambition he forgot his weariness for a little while.

"You are very tired and must be hungry. Come, have confidence in me! I will carry you home!"

"No!" said Martin, springing to his feet.

"Do not be afraid!" cried the spirit. "Do you think these flames would injure you?" and the devil with a groan of sad remembrance touched his tortured breast. "The fire of Hell can only pain the creatures of Hell. You might clasp me to your bosom and would not know that within your arms was a furnace of agony. Trust me, and I will carry you safely and immediately home!"

"No," Martin cried again. "It is not from fear of your presence or the pain which you endure. I cannot be carried by you, nor can I any more be guided by you, at least until your livery is that of the white angels. On this earth I am to labour for this earth and for its people, who are mine. I ask not, and I have not, any material help from God's angels. I do not, in the fulfilment of my life's

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object, depend upon them, and I should consider it a breach of Heaven's trust, even in this hour of passing need, to depend so absolutely as you invite me to do on you."

No sooner had Martin concluded his words than the devil gave a groan of utter misery and threw himself at full length on the ground. Then was repeated all the suffering of the previous night. He grovelled and shivered, and the luscious grass-blades, which came in contact with him, withered, shrivelled, and died. His moaning recommenced. Again with frenzied wings he beat the earth and fanned poison to the nearest flowers. Martin was so startled by this sudden paroxysm of pain and woe that he went hastily a little distance off and stood watching, irresolute, wishing to help, and yet careful not to invite temptation. Presently the writhing of the tormented one became less violent. The ribbed wings ceased their desultory flapping. The sobs and groans were softened into silence. The devil looked up, and there was less pain evident in his face. Seeing Martin awestruck and pitifully watching him, he tried to smile kindly: it was—inadequate simile!—like a pale star endeavouring to pierce a veil of storm-cloud—like a young rose lending its little possession of beauties to a world of murky misery—that heroic simple smile glinting through the woe-marked features from the piteous eyes. Martin's heart was deeply touched by it. He told himself that he must not desert that would-be virtuous victim of ancient vice. So far as was in his power, it was his duty to help the penitent to regain Paradise. After all, his ideal was not entirely a

material one: the ideal people had its earthly part certainly, but underneath the transient physical surface lay the spiritual actuality.

The devil then said, and his voice was very soft—sweet with the softness of sadness: “You are strong, O man. In the old days when, an invisible enemy, I gazed on the race of mortals in the worlds and saw them the victims of illness and disease, of contemptible habits, of foolish customs, of luxury and self-indulgence ending in the meanest of deaths, I thought—What weak, wretched creatures they are! It was often not necessary to tempt them to act amiss, they did it from love of dirt. But you, fortunate mortal, are different. When I saw them I was proud of being a devil. I was so superior. But now that I have seen a Man—the prince of his fellows—blessed with supreme excellence, physical, mental, spiritual, I am reminded of God, and I would barter my immortality to be a mortal like him—like you.”

“Hush!” said Martin. “Let us part now till to-morrow. Believe me, I am anxious to help you.”

“But you cannot find your way home!”

“Yes I can!” and he walked with a briskness he did not feel to a tree, purposing to climb that and survey the country. As soon as he reached the tree and laid his hand on the trunk he knew he had not the strength then to climb it. “God in Heaven help me!” his lips framed the words and his heart spoke them. He felt, then, lost and alone. He was, however, not alone. The eternal ones of Heaven were watching that long spiritual duel. They realised that it was a trial; but without a trial there could be no effort, without a battle there could be no victory. Martin

cried to God in his weakness and loneliness; and although a miracle was not done and there was no visible answer to his heart's prayer, he did not lose faith. He knew that God and goodness were near and with him. Temptation had come again; this communicative spirit was subtly endeavouring to destroy. Gradually, as he stood there, leaning by one hand against the tree, and looking sadly at the grass blades, the terrible truth came to Martin, but faint and weary though he was, his will was unfaltering to do the right. He was ready for the spiritual conflict.

"You are lost," said the devil, his tone suggesting that Martin was therefore dependent upon him.

"God has not forgotten me!"

"Lost!"—was there mockery or wonder in that voice?—"lost—and this world yours! The king of a country lost in his own country!"

"This world is God's. I am but His creature placed here to begin its development!"

"You are too humble."

"No mortal in relation to God can be too humble!" Martin's voice was quiet, not provocative, and firm, though the speeches of the spirit angered him.

"In relation to God—true! But Man on the worlds is not humble even in relation to God, and you are that man's superior as Heaven is superior to the least of the worlds. You should not be so meek. Remember, I am to be your servant! and the master of a spirit should be really a master."

Then Martin, conscious that this speech was aimed at his humility, spoke up stoutly: "You are not to be my servant. I am not to be your master. If I were I should say Go, and find you obedient."

The fiend looked searchingly at Martin. An expression of disappointment and pain came into his eyes, cutting the man's kind heart to the quick. The angel of evil sighed and hung his head, then, turning, slowly opened his wings and flew away.

## CHAPTER XVII

### TRIALS AND TRIBULATION

MARTIN was pained, to find his hoped-for convert flying away. There was one ideal gone! Yet, if that were a tempter, was it not a victory, and had he not escaped a peril by rejecting his dangerous suggestions so firmly? The insidious flattery aimed at Martin's humility, had been ineffectual: so far, very good. The thought gave him excellent heart, and he pondered as to which way he should go to find the lost home.

He walked to a wooded knoll and looked around, but everywhere appeared a dense screen of trees. He studied the sun, but having no certain fact by which to judge its relative position, and having lost anything like a certain estimate of the time of day, he could get very little assistance from that. He judged it was in the west, for it must be well after noon; but that foolish helter-skelter after the bird, and the subsequent misguidance of the devil had caused him to lose his direction, and whether he should travel sunwards or away from the sun to find Lucy and home-love, he could not tell. Nerved to make another effort, however, he toilfully clambered part of the way up a second tree, easier to climb than the other

one; but his body and limbs were utterly fagged, and through want of food his head grew dizzy, so that he could not rise above a useless height.

Thoroughly tired, body and mind, he looked round heavily. Grass, trees, sky and sun, they were all that he could see in that beautiful desolate place. "Ah!" he shrieked, and fell in a swoon from the branch on which he was standing. His fall was partly stayed by foliage, otherwise a bone or limb would probably have been broken. He had seen something more than grass and trees, sky and sun. He had seen a face, green with envy, livid with hate, lightened by red eyes burdened with curses. Martin knew the face. It had occurred to his mind many a time in the past, but never so fearfully as now. It was the face of Kezrel. The dreadful, detestable, cruel being was peering through an opening in the bracken. The bitter hatred of his look struck Martin's heart and numbed his senses, so that with a shriek he fell to lie for a long while in a swoon on the knoll. Kezrel flew, laughing the devil's laughter, from his hiding-place. As he passed over Martin's prostrate form he spat at it and hissed a curse, then that worst of the meaner spirits continued his flight, curving his course until he was on the track of his fellow-devil whom with hasty wings he followed.

Meanwhile Lucy anxiously watched and waited for the absent husband, and the little ones shared the mother's anxiety. For the first time since their happy union, Martin had been away from her more than a few hours. Throughout the night she watched and prayed, sitting in the midst of her sleeping



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darlings ; now and then with gentle fingers caressing them, from them gaining comfort. As the hours passed and her husband did not return, the fear grew in her breast that he was dead ; but she could not conceive the idea of death then in regard to him. He was so lusty with grand life, moreover his work on that world—with the children still so young—could not yet be done. With joyful relief she banished the thought of his being hindered from coming to her by death. Life without Martin would be to her Paradise shorn of its first delight. As the night went on she gathered the true cause of his absence, her heart told her the truth at once,—for standing by her home and gazing into the darkness she saw far away the tinge of a new light betokening the presence of an angel of ill. This fact did not frighten her as in some circumstances it might have done, for she had absolute confidence in Martin, and knew that despite all disadvantages he could not—would not—fail. She did not, however, lose her anxiety for him. His absence throughout the night justified that ; but the ever-gleaming flowers of Heaven, covering her home with beautiful light and clinging, sparkling, about the highest trees—the stars of the starless world—gave her continually the best comfort. The night passed through all its stages, from the grey twilight to the grey dawn, and still the loved one did not come. The sun rose, the day broadened, the world went to its work again, but the master-workman was not there to direct. The children awoke and called for their father, and the mother soothed their fears with the words that children love. Still Martin did not come. Through the long

day she waited, and still he did not come. Another night rolled past and another day was born; her heart was growing sick with anxiety and the desire to greet him, the children cried for him, and besieged their mother in baby clamour for the reasons of his absence. She told them he would return soon and bade them be happy with hope, but still he did not come, nor any of God's angels.

On the third day of the absence, she, with her baby-comrades, was walking among the trees doing the lesser deeds of Martin's daily toil, when her eldest boy, who had scampered in advance of her, clapped his hands and cried out with joy. Lucy, followed by her other children, hastened hopefully to where her little son was, and looked. Some distance away was the figure of a man—Martin!—walking hastily, as if following some one, for a few moments she could not see whom. She called to Martin, and the children in shrill chorus called too, but he heard or heeded not, and continued impetuously his way. His form disappeared behind a mass of shrubbery, and, at the very moment, another figure came into view from behind the same thicket. That was whom Martin was following, and it was a woman. Lucy did not believe her eyes; but, nevertheless, looked with feminine keenness at the stranger, while the children, sad with disappointment and frightened at their father's ignoring their appeals, clung to her skirts and cried.

The woman was exceedingly beautiful. There was no doubt of that, despite the distance between her and her observer. Tall, erect, excellently graceful, with raven-black hair, and face, neck and arms

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clear and white as marble. She wore a magnificent robe of purple-red, which served to heighten her wonderful attractiveness. Lucy watched until the mysterious woman passed from sight. She was astonished, puzzled. In a few moments Martin again appeared, soon to be hidden at the place behind which the woman he was following had disappeared. Despite this evidence of her senses, and her husband's continued absence, Lucy not for one moment doubted him. If that man were he—and without better evidence she would not credit even that—there was every reason, except the wrong one, for his action. She proved then and thereafter what Martin had always believed and known her to be—the perfect woman. She devoted herself instantly to comforting the children, and romped and raced with them—forcing herself to laugh and them with her—along the homeward way.

At noon, while they were eating the mid-day meal, Lucy saw Triest approaching. He was the first angel who had come to her since Martin had gone, and she went gladly to meet him—her mind full of words of question and explanation.

The angel was, however, in a mournful mood, and Lucy, knowing his habitual cheerfulness, was frightened at the change in him. He saluted her with the spear he carried, and said, in accents touched with deep regret, "Alas, Lucy, I bring ill news."

"Ill news of Martin?"

The angel signified assent.

"Is he dead?"

"Worse!—false to you—to us—to God!"

Lucy answered nothing. She waited, looking with

woe-struck eyes at the angel. She could not have spoken, had she tried, at that moment.

"Yes," said Triest, and his voice was now angry. "Martin is false! God, to people another part of this sphere had placed upon it a second couple, similar to Martin and to you. The wife of that new Adam was wandering in the wood, when Martin saw and loved her. Forgetting his ideal, forgetting you, forgetting God, but passionate in his new-born love, he followed her. She rejected his appeals, reminded him of his duty, and told him, with the pride of the true woman, that she was the bride of another. Martin—the false heart!—continued his protestation. He wooed her, and through his, persistent importunity, overcoming and answering all her scruples and objections, won her. Now in her arms he is spending the evil hours, and you and these cherubs of delight are forgotten!"

Lucy listened horror-struck. She bowed her head and hid her face in her hands. There was a pause of sickening silence. Martin was false! Martin was false! She could not, she would not believe it, even then. Martin could never be untrue. Looking straight into the angel's face, she bravely said so.

"It cannot be, it is not so!"

"I say he is false," returned the angel sadly. "This is the truth, as truly as I am true!"

Then another voice—Triest's, and yet another voice—spoke.

"Liar!" was the one simple fiery word which rang out like a bugle note.

Lucy, startled, gazed round: a wonderful joy sprang into her heart. Out of invisibility the true

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Triest had come. She looked amazed. Triest? There were two Triests facing one another, absolutely alike in every particular. So at first they appeared to be, but the extraordinary similarity began at once to disappear, for on the face of the one Triest was a righteous scorn, upon the other an unangelic fear.

"Liar!" Again the angry word was clearly, but now quietly spoken, and then with hot wrath the real Triest smote the false. At once, at the touch, the appearance of the latter quite changed. His disguise was lost. He appeared as he really was—a devil, that one with whom Martin had spent the night of lamentation, he who would serve. The fiend angrily couched his spear and lunged at Triest, but the angel, equally angry and in no way distressed, evaded the weapon and rushed at his adversary. The antagonists closed, in a great fury. The spear was wrenched from the devil's grasp. Fiercely the champions wrestled and smote.

Lucy frightened at this tremendous conflict ran to the children, and placed them in the home, singing to them to keep them quiet and unafraid.

When she turned again to watch the battle the devil was in flight, hotly pursued and repeatedly beaten by Triest. The angry spirits wheeled and curved one close behind the other in tortuous flight and pursuit among and then over the trees, until Lucy could follow their course no more. When they had gone, she bade the children kneel, and then she prayed. Soon after the silvery voices of the lisping little ones were heard by glad angels singing a hymn—one which the children loved especially,

one which the absent father had taught them; its melody was not dissimilar to the great chorus of victory so frequently chanted in Heaven.

Lucy was not again directly vexed by the evil spirits. They did, however, when hidden with invisibility, descend to the mean depth of tampering with the children, endeavouring to foment baby-anger and stimulate baby-greed, but the holy influence of the mother surrounded the children always, and even at that mean work the fiends were beaten.

When Martin recovered consciousness the dews of evening were heavy on the grass. The sun had disappeared behind the horizon and the earth was chill. He sat up shivering and looked round, dreading again to see the horrid face which beyond all else he loathed. To his relief there was no bad shape visible in the greyness, but also, and here the sense of loneliness recurred, there was no one of that goodly company, the angels, there to guide and comfort him. It was, however, something to be rid of the melancholy devil with his picture gallery of tortures. With some return of the old habitual cheerfulness, Martin told himself that if he must be lost it was better to be lost alone. The best of devils was bad company.

With an effort he rose to his feet. He still felt dizzy and faint through hunger, but the period of proneness had rid him of much limb-weariness. He determined at once to search for food—fruit and eggs. He had no idea which was the way home, so having said one prayer for God's guidance, he strode bravely

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along an avenue in a direction the reverse of that which the bad angel had taken.

Darkness—the pitch-black darkness of that moonless and starless world—very soon came over all. Martin climbed a slight eminence and gazed carefully north, south, east, west, for the glimmer of the fire which was always burning by his home, but there was no evidence of it reflected in the sky. Neither could he see the luminance of any of the flowers of Heaven. He must be very far away! His heart was not encouraged by the prospect of having to grope his way to find the home which might actually be situated in exactly the opposite direction to that he was going. Standing still, however, was not the way to reach the goal. He must march—march—march, and trust to Providence for guidance. At once he went onward, touching every tree that he passed to see if it were a fruit tree; but that land luscious with vegetable life seemed barren of fruit trees.

In the dead darkness he stumbled along. Often through unseen unevenness in the ground he fell, very often he walked into a bush or thicket to emerge scratched and with his clothing full of thorns, more than once he strode into a pool, many times he struck his head against a low-hanging branch. It was a desperate struggle, but still he struggled on. He was in sore need of food and yet was still more hungry for re-union with the dear home-circle. Ah! what would Lucy have thought of this continued absence? He knew she would be anxious; but he had confidence that her trust in him would not falter. How very happy the meeting would be! With fond

imagination he pictured delightful scenes. He seemed to feel the hands of his little ones clasping and pulling his cassock—when he fell, tripped by tangled undergrowth. Up at once he was though, buoyed by the brave determination to struggle on, through every difficulty and at any personal cost and physical fatigue.

Dawn came at last, and Martin exhausted, sat down to watch the sunlight creep across the sky. A new day had come. Would he that night be again with his loved ones? In a voice very faint from weariness he sang the usual matin-song.

He was in a long valley, the sides of which were covered with trees; at the bottom of the valley a river was running. Removing his sandals he laved his aching feet. While doing so he saw beyond the river a tree bowed down with ruddy fruit. His hopes revived. Lifting the skirts of his cassock, he waded across the stream, and without waiting to don his sandals ran to the tree. The tree!—where was it? Had hunger deceived him? Had want woven a mirage before his eyes? He looked at every tree particularly and carefully; his heart grew cold with disappointment. Not one of the trees was a fruit-tree! Every one was a particularly healthy specimen of its kind; but he could not eat leaves and timber. He walked slowly back to the river and turned to look at the forest. Again he saw the tree with the branches bowed low with ruddy fruit. Without removing his eyes from it he walked towards it, his appetite whetted by the prospect. He came to the tree and clasped its trunk with his hands, but—disappointment of disappointments! the tired, famished, dispirited



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man saw that the branches were barren. Hope had painted a pretty picture and the picture was all a dream. He groaned and prayed mutely for succour; but at once he was up again. He would not despair. He fastened on his sandals and went slowly to the river, having decided to follow that as it took its course to the sea. Any certain direction was better than a pathless wandering, and the sea once reached he might make his way along the coast to where on that long-ago morning he had found the flints. That spot was near his home. So along the river-bank, the way that the water flowed, he dragged his weary course.

He soon came to another fruit-tree, but the refreshing food hung high on the branches. Strengthened by need, however, he clasped and climbed the trunk and soon reached the upper parts where the fruit was hanging. Rejoicing and thinking thanks, he put out his hand to pluck, and he plucked—leaves! Was his head dizzy with much want? Had his mind again deceived him? He climbed higher into the tree. There was no fruit anywhere. He sat in the branches for a time dazed, then covering his face with his hands he relieved his pent-up feelings in one groan. He let himself down from the deceitful tree and continued his way by the river-bank, ever on the look-out for food and a known land-mark.

Presently he saw through the trees to the left a fact for which he could not account. He went quickly, refreshed by its appearance, towards it. There was a high crucifix, and hanging to the cross was the figure of the Saviour. Martin's heart welled full of tears which found vent at his eyes. He was touched by the comfort brought to him in the midst of his trial,

by that image of the Divine Sacrifice. He took its appearance there as a deed of the angels for the strengthening of his spiritual self. Tears of gratitude and of bodily weakness coursed down his cheeks. In sheer physical exhaustion he knelt and lay at the foot of the cross and tried to say prayers, but weariness played havoc with his thoughts and he could only rest. After a while—when his flood of emotions had taken their course—he looked up at the face of the Crucified to contemplate the story expressed thereon. Gradually the figure seemed to possess vitality. The eyes of the image of the Christ gained light and looked down on him, the lips began to move and to form words, a kind smile touched the sacred features. Then as the vitality increased, the face itself changed. The blue eyes with their burden of blessings were tinged with yellow, then they shone with a fierce green light: the holy face was degraded into a countenance dark and evil, the smile broadened into a mocking grin, the figure on the cross was now that of a devil with spiteful face, horned ears and writhing spiked tail—such a shape as in the old monastic days the monks had thought Satan was!

Martin was for the moment paralysed by the hideous transformation. He buried his face deep in the grass and smelt the earth in his passion for the truth which Nature, at least, has. When he looked up—as after a pause determinately he did—the cross with its devil-burden had vanished; and there was nothing before his eyes but the uninterrupted vista of fruitless trees. For a long while he lay on the grass, although the hot sunshine bathed him, shivering, a victim to acute nervous strain, waiting for relief.

He resumed his way. Not an animal crossed his path, not one bird-song during that day of spiritual trial greeted and comforted him. He moved, a silent man through a painfully silent world, and was filled with every hunger. In the late afternoon while looking in the river and wondering fondly whether this was the stream which ran past the home-eminence, he saw the reflection of an angel, robed in brightness, flying high in the heavens. Looking upward, Martin beckoned to the spirit and called to him for help. "Good angel, come to me!" The angel came at once, and seeing Martin's need, touched a tree. Instantly it was covered with shining fruit. The hungry man went forward, calling out his thanks to the bright being who was already flying away. He reached the tree and plucked the golden fruit; but, grievous disappointment! outwardly golden, inwardly the fruit was rotten to the core. Thrice again he plucked from the tree and thrice again he met with a similar disappointment. The fourth fruit he threw into the stream in the bitterness of woe.

"Devils! devils! all devils!" his sorrow found expression in those bitter words. Rapidly, while he spoke, the tree withered away; its new-sprung poisonous fruit had killed it. Martin in a frenzy of the fear of evil ran at full speed along the river-side; he did not mind starvation if he might only starve untroubled by the poison-makers. Death without sin was not to be shrunk from, although it meant a temporary parting from loved ones and dear associations. But this walk through the haunted world was full of mind-misery and soul-torture. The threat of devils was constant pain. Seven times he saw fruit-

trees, and every time the fruit was smitten and decayed. Every disappointment weakened his chastened spirit; but he bore up cheerfully and without complaint; an end would soon come to these trials so long as he was true to God and the ideal life. He cheered his spirit with a sadly quavering song.

Evening gathered over the earth. Darkness came too quickly on, and despite the calls of hunger, Martin's weariness was so great that stumbling over the roots of a tree, he fell, and resting where he fell, his head pillowed on a hillock of grass, was soon in a sleep.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MARTIN SAYS GRACE

LULLED by the wash of the river, Martin slept for a time well. His extreme fatigue was a good friend to him, for, in the utter absorption of sleep promoted by it, he gained needful rest and had no regard to the coldness of the night or the dew which soaked the skirts of his cassock. During those slumberous hours the devils at their councils left him untroubled, and the angels about that world, gathering in a shining multitude, blessed him, each one in succession stooping to touch the man's tanned brow.

After a while Martin dreamed. He was at home, at work on his history. Lucy was singing; the children were playing in and round the flower-decked home. Satisfied, at length, with the work at that hour accomplished, he put it aside, and Lucy, rising, went to the fire to bring baked fruit and eggs, and—useful and appreciated domestic implement, the effect of an hour of happy toil!—a wooden jar brimful of new milk. Laughing and shouting in unselfish rivalry, the little ones danced or toddled to the banquet. Martin, unusually ready for the feast, said a prayer of thanks, the united family sang a hymn, then—he awoke.

Another dawn had come, and the world at that waking moment was wet and cold. Martin sprang to his feet and moved hastily about to rid his limbs of the cramp and cold which for the time held them. The baked fruits and eggs and the refreshing milk were not for him. His eager appetite had for its satisfaction only the nourishment of a dream.

He took his disappointment cheerfully. His limbs were rested and the exercise warmed him. The gain of physical comfort—little as it was—gave him new hope. He raised his arms to the heavens and said the morning prayer, his first thoughts were for that little family circle of which he had dreamed. After the prayer he lingered over the vision, going through its details with loving deliberation. Yes, he thought, the disappointment of the waking was great, but the joy of the dream was worth it, and stimulated anew by the disappointment and the joy, he set out on the morning's march.

There were still no signs of food, but as soon as the day was sufficiently warm, he plunged into the river. Fresh water is, however, but sorry refreshment after a sixty hours' fast, and Martin was weakened rather than assisted by the exercise.

Before resuming his journey he climbed a high tree reaching to the branches at the very top, whence he examined the country round. On all sides nothing but tree-tops met his sight—a beautiful world of greenness under a dome of blue. He could not distinguish any object helping him to determine the direction of home. He was utterly lost and evidently still very far from the wished-for destination. He descended less hopefully than he climbed the tree.

On again, along the river bank, towards the sea. No living fact other than vegetable life, saw he, on that solitary march. He started on the journey with eager, sturdy strides, but soon the unwonted fasting told upon him, his steps became shorter and less certain. He amused his mind with thoughts of the old monastery life. What a change from that condition to this! Then he fasted voluntarily, but compared with this that fasting was recreation! He remembered the jovial cheer of the monks on a day of festival, and called to mind the rich viands and varied dishes which burdened the table then. He brushed these remembrances aside as not quite worthy. Better to starve in the new world and have known Lucy, than live and enjoy the animal cheer of those selfish religious. Noon came, still no food, despite his watchfulness, was discovered. Nevertheless, he plodded bravely along.

Presently Martin heard the rustling of wings and turned hoping; but still disappointment was his companion. It was the melancholy fiend come again. He still wore the lurid livery and was yoked and girdled with flame. But he did not stop. To Martin's surprise he flew as if in a panic and anxious to escape from a tumultuous pursuer. He journeyed in a zigzag course, rising and descending as he went, dodging among the trees, all the while in a huddled-up attitude, as though cringing under the threat of angry blows. Very soon he disappeared in the woodland, and Martin wondered at the strangeness of the event. He did not see Triest, because, during his trial, Triest, as all the angels, was to his eyes invisible; but in his heart, by

a new-sprung gladness, he was conscious—though he was too worn and fagged fully to realise the consciousness—that an angel of God was near him. His nerves, his physical being, not his mind, were conscious of the presence.

That sense of exaltation did not last long however, a feeling of deep depression—devil-inspired—came over him. His limbs and every part of his body ached; it seemed as if a load of lead were fastened on his brow. Wretched thoughts ran through his brain, and a feeling of discontent, foreign to him, was engendered in him. Every wretched thought and every inclination to discontent was, however, deliberately and with a prayer set aside. In that dire hour of heaviness and depression Martin did not sin. He walked on, not only tired, but in bodily pain. The effort of the march was wrought in torture, but still he struggled on, keeping close to the river-side.

Then, suddenly it seemed a vision framed in the foliage, but perhaps it was only a mental, fiend-suggested picture—he saw Lucy lying white and dead. Behind her loomed the fire her pyre, and over her in a pall hung a cloud of its smoke—the incense of funeral. Sitting at the foot of the dear, sad corpse were the children, huddled piteously together, wailing.

Martin's heart gave a great beat of sudden anguish. During that moment he was a very wretched man; but, automatically, in the old monastic way, he made the sign of the Cross. It was the physical expression of a prayer. Perhaps the mere act occasioning new cause for thought—a sudden recollection of the dead



days—chased the phantom from his mind. Martin gazed into the thicket where it had shone—nothing but greenness—fruitless foliage—there!

He breathed a sigh of relief, but the vision kept him sad, and he longed, fiercely longed, for Lucy and the little ones. The continued separation was very hard to bear; the tears of permissible self-sympathy came to his eyes: starvation he could endure, but this divorce and banishment was difficult to endure. He flung himself on the ground and poured forth his sorrow in the emotion of prayer.

As he prayed, a chorus of voices greeted him. He rose to his feet, listening. He could see nothing but the one endless panorama of dreary woodland. He walked on, sick of heart and weary of limb. Then he became conscious of beings barely visible there about. He could at first distinguish no forms; it seemed as if transparent personalities were gliding in a circle round him; their presence teased him. He walked quickly, but could not escape from the mysterious company. The voices grew louder. It was a mocking, irritating song; the singers seemed everywhere—in the trees, in the river, in the sky, under his feet. He ran, frantic to escape from that intolerable circle, and covered his ears with his hands to keep out the chattering chorus; but ever with him moved and wheeled the mocking spirits. The forms became more definite, their transparency grew less, and Martin could see a medley of mischievous shapes—devils of every form—grinning, nodding, leering at him, as in wild motion they danced.

The tormented man realised that every sign of irritation which he displayed was a triumph to his

persecutors, so, quite calm, he stood and watched them. They stopped their dance and clamour, and stood, every one, in a similar posture to his, mocking him still. He resumed his way, they began again their wild and dizzying gyration. Martin, with an effort of will, ignored them, he walked on as if they were not there.

Then a loud call ran through the forest, an angry cry, and he heard the flapping of devils' wings. As mist vanishes before a new-sprung breeze, so the circle of tormentors broke up and disappeared. Martin saw again the fiend who had offered to become his servant. The face of the devil lowered with anger, as he flew swiftly towards Martin.

"How dare they!" he cried, "how dare they mock God's man—my master!"

Martin said not a word, and made no welcome.

"You would not help me, nor allow me to help you, obstinate man, yet I am here! When you dismissed me I was so saddened and wounded and filled with hopelessness that I said to myself, 'I will leave him to his folly! Let him find his way alone!' and I flew away to loneliness and misery, uncertain what to do. What could I do? I had flown from Hell: and you, my human hope, would not help me to reach Heaven. I was in despair. Then I heard the flapping of evil wings. I listened. They were the wings of one I knew well in Hell—of one who hated me—of one whom I hated—Kezrel! Ah, you know him too!" Martin had shuddered and turned white with terror. "That worse of bad beings had come to this world to destroy your Paradise, and was following me! Silently I flew through the woodland

intent on escape. Still I was followed relentlessly. I exerted my wings to the utmost: never have I flown—never did angel fly—as I flew then. Twice round this world I went, and never once during that angry chase could I get far enough from my pursuer. I never listened but I heard behind me the remorseless wafting of his wings. Then I flew away from the world—far away, beyond that shining sun whither I was not followed, and so I escaped. But—a friendless wanderer among the worlds—I remembered you, and because you had been ready to hearken to my tale I forgot your dismissal of me and ignored my danger. Although I knew that it was a great peril to return here, as discovery means manifold Hell for me, I was determined to warn and help you. Warily I returned and here I am. My master! I will earn virtue and the reward of Heaven by assisting you in this trial—for you are to be tempted!”

At these last words Martin felt a throb. He was to be tempted! At last the danger, expected for years, was openly announced. Temptation had begun! The enemies were about him. Against him, the human champion of virtue and the ideal estate, were pitted Satan and the wisdom of the lost. He was faint and ill, but he nerved his heart.

“Did I not see you, soon after noon to-day, flying as if in a panic and pursued?” he asked quietly.

The devil looked keenly at him. “Yes, I was seeking you, when I thought I heard our enemy. I flew frantically to escape from him.”

Martin said no more, and in deep thought went along. The devil accompanied him. The man, even in his desperate situation, and with his nerves in a

tremor at the bold announcement made in the midst of his weakness, was determined not to invite his assistance. He had no faith in this self-constituted guide, despite his bold stories and frequent protestation. He was, nevertheless, tired of his journey, and he longed for help. Frequently he rested, always he sought food, always was disappointed. The fiend made no offer of help. He seemed waiting to be bidden, but Martin—even in his excess of weariness and straits of fasting—was firm to ask no favour, nor depend for assistance on any one not on the side of God.

A misty rain began to fall, increasing the miseries of the man. It stopped after a very few minutes, but gave the devil an opportunity which was not neglected.

"I must help you," he said, "although you dislike being assisted by me: your misery is greater than I can endure to witness."

"Leave me!" sighed Martin: "let me fight my battle my own way."

"You will starve if you do! No; I am your servant, and I will assist you."

"I cannot be dependent upon you, until you are redeemed and God has received you."

The devil laughed bitterly: his laugh was not that of a hopeful angel. "Then you must starve and wander—lost—for many a long day, for the fruits of my penitence will be no sudden growth. I have before me at least years of silent probation. This weight of sorrow is the accumulation of æons; it cannot be put off except by the efforts of an æon of sacrifice. But here is a bargain, and I make it to

salve your proud heart. I can help you without your being under any obligation to me. We shall be as master and servant should be—under mutual obligations to each other, and the shame, if there be shame in the compact, is on the servant, me, not on the master, you. Listen carefully, and decide quickly, so that you may be restored to Lucy, and I, by this service to you, may be nearer my ideal."

"I am listening."

"On condition that you do not tell any of God's angels that I am on this earth and in service under you, I will immediately fly away, find you strength-giving food, and so assist and guide you that to-night you will be among your loved ones."

"I cannot grant the condition," said Martin quietly.

"I knew that would be your answer if you spoke at once. Do not speak at once; weigh the bargain; consider well."

Martin sat by the side of the river and watched the passage of the water. There were no fish evident therein; like all else in that luxuriant wilderness it seemed barren of animal life. While his eyes were gazing at the eddying flow, his mind was considering the devil's alternative. His body was weak for the want of food, his heart was sore through yearning for his loves; but duty was stronger than all considerations. He had no right to make any condition to keep truth from God's angels.

He rose and said with decision, "No."

The devil's face was immediately alight with anger. His eyes gleamed. He partially opened his wings in the paroxysm of wrath. He did not disguise his feeling. There were no more pitiful smiles.

"Obstinate fool! Help yourself! and may Hell soon receive you." With one passionate motion of the right arm, as if he were hurling an invisible dart at Martin, he strode away, and then, hastening, flew. His mouth was working constantly, as if he were mumbling imprecations. Thus in a frenzy of anger that fiend went, and Martin, so far as he was aware, saw him no more.

The wandering man seemed no better off, though, through that departure. He was indeed sorely beset. He knew not which way to go, and unless food were found soon it would be impossible for him to move. His splendid store of strength was after all but limited. He had, however, no alternative but to continue his course by the side of the river, and hope. An invisible fiend, one of the lesser spirits, with a subtle whisper, put into his brain a regret that he had lost the potential aid of his recently-departed enemy; but Martin put the devil-suggestion aside. He would rather die to wait for reunion with Lucy in Heaven, for that was what death then meant to him, than diverge the least from the ideal which was clearly set before him. In this manner, by faithful adherence to a simple principle, and cheerfulness, Martin resisted the insidious poison which the minor devils endeavoured to sow.

His condition at length grew more than serious. Again and again he stumbled through weariness and fell, but always with a steadfast heart he struggled to his feet and went his way. It was grievous work, and every pace marked an effort of suffering. He strengthened himself with recollections of the saints and the visions of them which he had dreamed in the

old dead days. He regained strength when he recalled his early ideals—how he had been willing to endure the pains if he could enjoy the opportunity of the martyrs. Was not that early aspiration now being in some measure fulfilled? Was not this fight with pain and deadly weariness a miniature martyrdom, so that in some degree he might humbly feel a wearer of the livery of saintship? It was a brave thought, thought modestly; but it gladdened and helped Martin wonderfully. Once more—but in how different circumstances from that hour in the monastery garden!—he saw the old saint-army pass in proud procession. Again he heard the mystical music of their triumph chant! His heart was high with beautiful pride, because in his lone world he shared with those holy sufferers of another sphere the distress and the glory of pain endured for the sake of an ideal. His brain was bright with pictures, his ears rang with the saints' chorus!

Hush! did he hear the imagined chorus of the phantom saints? Music was ringing through the wood. He listened with rapture to the sound of beautiful voices. Angels! Angels! He turned from the river, and with fresh energy ran through the wood towards the sound. The voices became gradually hushed, and although with beating heart and straining eyes he sought for the angel-forms, he could not for some while see them, and the spirited music was gently dying away. Then he saw one angel walking towards him. His joy at the sight was so great that he almost swooned with happiness. The load of a deep sorrow seemed lifted from his heart. His delight increased till it almost seemed a pain, as

the magnificent spirit, his figure robed in light, his eyes smiling welcome, came towards him.

"Poor weary one," said the angel, "come with me."

Martin gladly followed, through an avenue thick with flowers. Bright-blossomed creepers clung to and hung from the fresh-leaved branches above him. The picture of his immediate surroundings reminded him of the first walk with Broon in Heaven.

"You are worn and hungry," said the bright one sympathetically.

Martin's heart was so full—the relief was so complete—that he could not speak. His lips moved with words of gratitude, but the words were not vocal. He was conscious of a sweet savour, of the smell of delicate food, not the simple fare of his simple life, but such viands as stood on the monastery table in the luxurious days of ecclesiastical festival. The angels were giving him that dainty fare, because he had triumphed after temptation! Tears of gratitude and happiness and hope coursed down his cheeks at this prospective end of his days of labour and fasting. The sweet and welcome savour grew momentarily stronger! The banquet was at hand.

The angel led him out of the flower-filled avenue into an open place. On the ground a cloth of damask was laid and the festive incense—the smoke of excellent food—went up. Rich meats, fruits and wines in orderly array decked the board. Martin smiled as he gazed on the promising festival. About the open place, resting on the bank and poised among the trees were angels, some with harps and some holding palms in their hands. As Martin was led by his guide to the feast they broke into choric



melody, and from their harps drew silvery strains, while they strewed the cloth with flowers and waved their palms. The joy and the music filled the tired hungry man with an ecstasy of delight. Despite his hunger he forgot the banquet in the rapture of the sounds and scene.

The angel who had guided Martin raised his hands, instantly there was silence. Martin was standing by the table when he heard his conductor say:

"Mortal, after your days of heroic suffering and brave endurance of the pain and faintness of fasting, we give you food. So eat: but stay! This rich banquet is yours, on condition that you thank neither us nor any one for it."

Martin looked at the speaker and then at the clustered crowd amazed. He could not at first grasp the significance of the condition.

"Not--thank--God?" he slowly asked.

"Neither God nor any of us!" The words were cruelly distinct. There was no mistaking their meaning. They struck Martin as if they were edged like a knife. The scene swayed before him. He felt dizzy. Angels and trees were blended in a whirl of varied brightness. "Not thank God?" Again and again the impossible question asked itself to his brain. Were these angels? Could he partake of that feast and not thank the Giver of all good things? He recovered self-control with an effort, and once more asked himself the question and realised the alternative. He was faint from hunger. He might enjoy that necessary and appetising food on condition that he deliberately broke his rule of thanking Heaven before every meal he ate.

"I must thank God!"

A hiss seemed to spring from the crowd of angels. He looked quickly at them, but they were all brightness and smiles. They were angels, he told himself, and this was an angelic test of his endurance! He laughed, and the leader of the assemblage—his conductor—laughed too, laughed kindly. Martin realised the situation. It was a new temptation, not to cause him to sin, but to prove his faith and principles.

"God," he said at once, "I thank thee—thank thee for this very welcome food!"

The words were spoken. Again the hiss ran out. Martin was aware of a fading of the brightness. The angels and the banquet were going—they were gone! He was again alone! The food so nearly enjoyed was taken from him! He had overcome a great temptation. He had triumphed there, but his heart was faint, his head was dizzy: he knew the bitterness of bitterest disappointment. The angels were devils, and he was in grievous want! He sat down, his senses numbed. For a time he could do nothing but remain supine. Yet—here was his heroism!—he did not lose hope nor faith even at that dreadful moment. Those angels were devils, but there were true angels in the world, and there was prepared for him a banquet richer and better than any material one invented by devil or by man—the eternal banquet of the Heavenly existence. In the depth of his physical woe he was brave and true.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE COURT OF FIENDS

IT was no despondency which Martin was knowing, but sudden severe revulsion, and as is the case with nearly every such feeling in a hopeful spirited heart, there was prompt recovery. Martin struggled up from the ground, and hastened to depart from that place of deceit. He felt very weak—all the weaker because the food which restores strength to the body and the heart was so near, and then so strangely lost. He took no credit for the triumph he had gained, he thrust all thoughts and remembrances of the incident away. He only knew he must struggle on, until he could struggle no more.

Very soon he reached the river again, and there beheld on all sides of him trees richly laden with fruit. Had he suddenly come to a land of plenty, or had his eyes been deceived during the recent wandering, or was he dreaming now? No, this was true fruit. He plucked, but before his lips touched the luscious food, he knelt, and with very deep gratitude, thanked God for it. Then, seated by the river bank, he rested and ate. At last that trial of fasting and weakness was over! After the

meal he felt a new man. It was again a roscate world, gladdened with hope. Now for home! his heart cried. Homeward-ho!

Refreshed, he walked on, although night was nearly come, keeping carefully to the river-side. He made rapid unmolested progress, and except for a very few pauses for rest and food, did not halt. When day came he had journeyed many leagues, but was still in unknown country. Soon after dawn the river broadened into a great lake fringed with wild foliage and gorgeous flowers—nature beautiful; but still the birds were wanting, and he missed the joy of their voices. The silence made him feel terribly alone. He slept during the hottest hours of the day, but with eagerness continued his march as soon as he was rested. He was in pain—actually his heart ached, so acute was its yearning—for want of the society of his loved ones. To be in this way divorced from them was almost intolerable. All his accustomed patience and the heroism of his character were required to keep him from breaking down and giving way, at least to temporary relapse. He was more lonely than ever he had been. Even when, before Lucy came, he had lived upon the world, he had not been so much alone as now, for then the angels visited him. Now he had no company, except devils, and there was no creature—animal, bird, or insect—to break the silence or interrupt the solitude of that weary march. Martin yearned with the pain of passion for the society of his fellows, and spoke aloud to himself, that he might hear the sound of human voice. The accents of his own speech in that world of wildness but increased

the sense of his solitude. His voice seemed strangely thin amid that great silence.

He reached the farther end of the lake by sunset, and was relieved to find that the river, into which again it had narrowed, continued its course seaward, and did not flow, as he had begun to fear it might have done, out of hill-country into the lake. The lake was an expansion of the river, not an inland sea, and into it a cycle of rivers drained. Until it was dark he continued his journey along the valley, and marched with but little rest throughout the night.

Gradually again he came to know that unseen presences were about him. It was the same feeling that harassed him when previously the circle of grotesque shapes had danced round him. Despite his watchfulness, he could see nothing. He was haunted by<sup>o</sup> intangibilities which oppressed him. He began to watch for daylight, feeling that he would then be unaccountably safer. Meanwhile, to evade the dangers of starvation resulting from a possible area of foodless trees, or the illusion caused by demoniac trickery, he plucked fruit and kept a store of it in the pouch at his waist.

Daylight glimmered at last, and his heart rejoiced. It rejoiced still further when at the horizon he saw, lighted by the rising sun, a range of blue mountains. Until then he had been unaware that there were mountains on his world. He determined to reach those heights. It was an objective to march towards; from thence he might see the sea.

The oppressive personalities were, however, still about him, and the growth of the day did not dispel

them ; their unpleasant potency seemed the rather to increase as time went on. His way, too, seemed to get more difficult. Many times he stumbled—that may have been through fatigue ; but twice he stepped into the river and dragged himself out drenched, and on those occasions he had not tumbled in through weariness or carelessness, but because he had been deceived by means occult. The prankish fiends were at their games again, preparing for a new store of trials by this series of fantastic and illusive acts. Martin sat for a time perplexed, but to stay still was foolish. At any cost he must continue, at least until those blue mountains were under his feet.

His road did not grow easier. A third time, having put his foot on what he thought was solid earth, he found himself plunged in the river. This time he did not drag himself out at once, but swam along, and with the flow of the stream made good progress. The growing weight of his garments and the satchel of fruit, however, impeded and fatigued him, and once more he clambered to earth, keeping nearer the wood and farther from the river-bed. Then he found himself continually walking against trees and losing himself suddenly in the midst of unexpected thorny thickets. Trees disappeared, and appeared in new places ; clumps of lurid flowers suddenly changed their colour ; grasses lengthened to great heights and then dwindled again. Momentarily he grew more perplexed as the fantastic persecution went on. The unnatural derangement of things annoyed him. He sighed resignedly, but ever with cautiousness plodded along. Then a veil seemed to drop before him ; he found himself walking into a mist. Progress was now

so difficult that he had to grope along on hands and knees; but blind crawling was so wearisome that he lay still after a time, and rested, waiting for the cloud to go. The evil presences were still about him, and deep depression grew on him. He seemed bowed down beneath an awful impending dread, but with an effort was able to suppress his tendency to express his mind-misery in a groan; he would not flatter his oppressors in any way. The tension grew so great that it became well-nigh intolerable. His deep and hurried breathing testified to the woe his body and mind were suffering.

Was that a voice, or the breathing of wind seemingly articulate, or was it his depression speaking in his brain? He crouched, listening. "They have sinned! they have sinned!" distinctly he heard a soft voice say in accents of triumph. Who had sinned? Martin, with numbed heart, mutely asked himself. "The children! the children!" At this answer Martin groaned and fell quite prone. The children! In his absence they had been tempted and had failed. Bitterly he blamed himself for being led away by the demon of misery, and having left them to endure devilish allurements and deceit! Was the ideal which his world was bearing so soon to be destroyed? A few short years only had elapsed since he set foot on that new earth, determined to maintain, as far as he could, an unselfish and sinless estate; and now—already—the devils had triumphed; and the pure little ones, his immediate followers, would go through life bearing the bitter burden of knowing that they were the originators of their world's sin! The thought of his children victims to the cunning of the evil-

makers touched his heart, in his heavy depression he wept.

Soon, however, he recovered himself, and fought against the load of morbidness that was breaking him. Was he to doubt the goodness of his babes because of a voice, and that, too, after he had been for days and nights haunted by subtle liars? He quickly weighed the position, and decided that the idea of disaster was preposterous. The mysterious suggestion that they had sinned was not to be trusted. He rose to resume his way, the fear that the ideal of his world was broken was brushed aside. He would not believe it, at least till the angels told him, and then—it was not for him to despair, but to fight for the ideals that remained. The mist still hung thickly around him; to make his way was impossible. Quickly he decided. He knelt and asked aloud for the help of God. His prayer was answered by a chorus of sharp and discordant voices, shrieking foolish blasphemies and mocking his weakness, but gradually the mist thinned, and ere long it was gone. God's own sunshine poured into the valley, and with the mist the mischievous influences and the attendant depression went also.

He walked on relieved, and presently came to a very beautiful hollow. The river gurgled through thick wavy grasses; bright flowers wantoned everywhere, nodding and swaying as the wind breathed on them; the surrounding slopes were covered with trees.

The brightest objects in this brilliant view were, however, not immediately seen by him. A group of beautiful spirits—not angels, alas! but very



beautiful—lay and sat in that enchanted hollow. Martin saw them before they seemingly saw him. He stopped and watched them warily. It was a happy gathering: the devils—for such, alas! not being angels, they were (there are no angels not of God or Satan, despite legends to the contrary)—talked and laughed, sang and played in perfect holiday mood. Martin, gazing on their happy-heartedness, felt an intruder, but after his days of loneliness and various misery, that picture of comradeship was wonderfully comforting. He did not, though, forget that they were enemies, and knew from experience that it was not necessary for a fiend to wear the lineaments of Kezrel to be dangerous. The sweetest of devils is really the most dangerous. Martin decided to go before it was too late. He was creeping away preparatory to crossing the river and escaping into the woodland beyond, when his name was called, "Martin! Martin!"

More hastily he hurried off, but very soon heard the waving of wings, and a devil—bright and magnificent, shining with all the angelic splendours except that of goodness—sprang on to the path in front of him, barring his progress, covering the passage with his outspread wings.

"Return with me. We are your friends. We have no desire to harm you."

"Let me pass!" cried Martin. "Do not hinder me." There was more appeal than command in his voice. He was yearning for home so strongly, and felt that the devils were dangerous obstacles in the way he wished to take.

"Come with me!" said the other firmly, and Martin, feeling drawn by a spell, involuntarily followed the devil back to the glistening group. He noticed that the place wherein they sat or lay was the centre of a circle of dead flowers and grass. He wondered that they had not endeavoured to hide the damning fact: possibly, though, being so used to decay and death, they were not conscious of its incongruous presence there. They were in any case a very gay and cheerful concourse, some twenty in number, and now and then one or other more spirit joined them, until there were nearly forty— all smiling, all laughing, all pleasing, all beautiful, all devils. Martin watched and waited.

One of the spirits then said to him in a casual way, as if the fact enclosed in the statement were of little moment to him or them:

"The angels have abandoned this world! Your ideal is broken! The perfect life here is destroyed! The angels have abandoned you!"

Martin answered: "That is not true!"

The group of devils laughed at his assertion. Their mirth was that of generous victors, easily regarding an unimportant enemy. They impressed him as being anxious to show that they were friends, not enemies. There was nothing of Kezrel about any of them, nor any evidence of remorse or ugly pain; but Martin did not trust them, and had too much faith in the angels to believe that they would finally abandon even the most vicious of worthless worlds. He made no answer to the laughter, but stood calmly waiting.

The fiends ranged themselves in a wide three-

quarter ring round him, each one sitting in a wide circle of dead flowers and herbage.

"Sit!" said one of the devils. Martin obeyed. Lovely flowers and living grasses clasped him to the knees. The evil beings saw the contrast between his surroundings and theirs. One of them walked to Martin and trod in a circle round him. The flowers and grass faded beneath the footsteps, and Martin, too, sat on a mound in the midst of bareness. His lip curled in contempt for the petty deed of destruction, and one or two of the fiends noticing it, glared for the moment angrily at him, but immediately afterwards they were all kindly smiling—a court of majesty and apparently of mercy.

The ringleader of the spirits, he who had commanded Martin to speak, but was no more majestic than any of the others in appearance, motioned to Martin to gather his attention. Then he said:

"When my comrade told you that the angels had abandoned this world you said it was a lie. It was no lie. To impress upon you that it was the truth, I will rise and challenge any one of the warriors of Heaven to disprove the statement by appearing."

A ripple of soft applause followed these words.

The devil rose—very stately was he—and, spreading his wings, turned slowly round, so that successively he faced every direction, while he cried with a loud voice:

"Angels of God, if there be one or many of you on this world or within a thousand leagues of it, I charge you—I challenge you—appear!"

There was no response. Martin's heart throbbed audibly in the agonised silence. He gazed round eagerly, and expectantly, for an angel to come and

answer the fiend's boldness. Again the devil spoke, his accents echoed and re-echoed through the trees.

"Angels of Heaven, if any of you be on this earth or within a million leagues of it, I charge you—challenge you—to appear, to prove to this mortal that you have not abandoned him and his to the power of Hell!"

Silence again. Had the angels indeed abandoned him? Martin thought, and then brushed the thought aside.

"Angels of Heaven! If ye have not abandoned and left to the mercy of Satan this world and its men, appear at once and dare to say I lie!"

The devil having spoken, stood waiting. He folded his wings. There was perfect silence. No angel appeared to answer the challenge. The fiends smiled.

"You lie!" It was Martin who spoke. He could not resist the inclination rising in his heart to answer the insolent enemy. Despite the non-appearance of the angels he did not for an instant believe that they had left the world. Not to answer a devil's challenge was no evidence of despair among the angels, but for him to be silent after such a challenge would have been wrong.

The circle of fiends was aflame at the bold answer of the solitary man. Several of them, with anger hot in their countenances, rose in threat, but a commanding gesture from the ringleader quieted them. They resumed their seats, and all stared with burning eyes at Martin, as if to torture him with a unison of searing glances. He felt the oppression of their bitter gaze, but strengthened himself with thoughts of prayer.

"It is foolish of you to speak so boldly," quietly the fiend continued. "The angels have not chosen to answer my direct challenge, and so, by ignoring its terms, have proved that the only spirits on this your world are the vassals of Hell. Do you think if Heaven were really omnipotent, that its warriors would have failed to appear when I cried, as you heard I did, to them?"

"Yes," Martin interrupted, and then he said with deliberation, as he measured and weighed his words: "The omnipotence of Heaven is not disproved because the angels ignored you. Because an army does not appear to punish a pigmy, it does not follow that the army is afraid of the pigmy!"

"You are too bold!" said the devil angrily, and then was silent; but another fiend took up the burden of speech.

"Mortal, beware of conceit! In your narrowness and vanity you presume to think that we, the angels of Hell, are inferior, not only to our brethren who did not rebel, but to man." The voice of the speaker was quiet and touched with sadness. "You forget that we are spirits immortal and eternal, while man breathes but for a few years and then is dust—disagreeable dust. The least of the fiends cannot decay, nor can ever die. Æons upon æons hence he will be actively existent, and æons upon æons after that will be, as ever, glorious with perfect power and unfailing strength. Where will man be then? Not even the world on which his bones were buried will be existent. Its atoms will be dispersed through space and consumed in the furnaces of the wonderful suns; not a particle of the bones of his body on which he hung

his finery will remain, for man is mortal. His body does decay after a very few years, and he must die. You are a man. We, whom you ignorantly despise, are immortals, capable of entering everywhere but Heaven, capable of influencing everything except God and His ever-obedient angels. Where can you go—away from this earth? What can you influence—even here? Mortal, curb your arrogance and vanity: remember, you are only a man."

The devil paused, but gazed with sad, wise eyes at Martin, who listened not without humility. Very silent and still was that circle of beautiful spirits. Not a sound breathed in that spacious world, not a leaf rustled; the song of the river was muffled into absolute silence: it was an hour of morbid peace.

"During your sojourn on this earth, you have been very vain. Our angels watched you long ere you thought they did, and have not disturbed or molested you. For some years yet you will remain in the spell of this narrow vanity, and then you may gather wisdom. Circumstances will be different. At present you can strut and laugh in your little limits, and having only a very narrow horizon, can plume yourself on being the king of the place; but beyond those limits are areas which you will never see, where the creatures there abiding would scoff at your ideas of sovereignty. Now you are in the lush of life, strong and healthy, able to gather and enjoy the fruit supplied by Nature, which we—as well as the angels—bestow; they have not the monopoly of practical beneficence! but twenty—thirty—forty years hence—what then?—when old age has crept on you and your teeth have fallen out, your eyes are blind, your ears deaf, your limbs quaking

with the palsy of years!—what then? Do not think because you are now lusty and proud, and physically perfect, that then you will be! No, you are mortal, and the active years which mortals enjoy are at the best very few; the end of a purblind, semi-deaf, mumbling old man on this earth will be so dismal that Hell will be a grateful relief to you!”

“Why are you saying this?” asked the mortal whose end was thus predicted.

“To curb your vanity.”

“Believe me, I am not forgetful of my mortality!”

“I know you better than you know yourself, but you will know yourself—some day!”

“I do not think you know me.”

“There your vanity speaks. We do know you. The mind of a mortal is easily read by an immortal. Brains of flesh mould imperfect reason, otherwise you and your brother-men on the worlds would be less conceited. We do know you, and can see what your end will be, when the novelty of this idyllic existence has worn off, and you are plagued with the inevitable troubles of bodily decay!”

“But why do you wish to curb my vanity? I hardly thought that was your work!”

“It is my work. The angels who are not of Heaven know the need of dispelling the vanity which clouds the minds of men. The shabbiest of human sinners thinks himself superior to the devil. We dispel that illusion. That is one reason why we condescend to affect the fates of the worlds.”

Martin said nothing further then. Argument was of no avail. He realised well that he was only a mortal, and it was no use urging protestations on

this chiding spirit, whose motives were not plainly apparent. Martin felt that there was some indirect attack on him in this, and, without losing confidence, was wary. During the conversation the devils in the ring sat composedly, majestically, there. There was no difference in their aspect; they were, as at the beginning, bright and gentle and sweet. The only difference at all which the watchful man realised was that the circle of deadness around each one had spread and was spreading as they continued to sit there.

Martin was certainly not less humble because of the strange homily addressed to him, but he was not one whit depressed, and was alert to catch, if he could, the motive behind the spirit's words.

The devil continued his homily.

"You have been the plaything of the angels, and they are now tired of you. You have had dreams of Heaven and visions of a new world here; but all your gain has been—dreams and visions. Fool! We will show you later how you have been victimised; but, first of all, listen to a little of the truth. What is man composed of?—Dust. When man dies what becomes of his body?—It decays to dust. And the years which intervene between his birth and death—that little realm of noise punctuating the two eternities of silence—what is that but the revelation of dust by a little flickering sunshine? Through all these eternities the spirits live, but man is—eternally—dust."

"Man is not only dust."

"Vanity not knowledge there protests. How dare a mortal speak of these high things! He is fettered by circumstances to the earth; he cannot see beyond a visual distance; he cannot get away from the world



where he is born, strive he ever so; and yet he presumes to dogmatise on Heaven and Hell, and ventures to construct a little theology by his own unaided self in the blind hope of gathering comfort for his vanity, and escaping from the inevitable. He tells himself that after death he will be as the spirits, though his brother mortals, the birds and animals, are not to be admitted to the spiritual paradise, and thinks by saying and repeating this fable that it is true, and that he has become an immortal!"

Martin was stimulated to speak. He spoke with angry warmth.

"Now *you* are speaking with ignorance! If you had been brought into relation with goodness as in recent years I have been——"

"How?"

"With the angels."

The circle of devils laughed.

"Where are the angels?" asked the critical fiend with a sneer.

"I have faith in the angels, and I say that if you had seen as much of them, spoken with them, watched their practical goodness, as I have done, you would not have thought that man was merely dust. He is not eternally dust, and if he were, you and your comrades would not have afflicted me as you have done during these recent days!"

A murmur of mock applause came from a few of the spirits. Martin angrily glanced at them. He noticed, with a start, that their beauty was not so heaven-like as it had been. There was a lurid tinge about them all, it was as if their real selves were unconsciously penetrating the angelic disguise.

"We afflict you!" cried the grim spirit scornfully. "You afflict us! Here is a world rolling round a solitary sun. We see it unoccupied except by a puffed-up man and his squalid family. We come claiming it as an island of the empire of Hell; but you are here, and the eternal spirits cannot tolerate the perpetual presence near their habitation of a race of mortals. You offend us. We dislike you. You are always in our way!"

"This world does not belong to Hell. It belongs to God. All the worlds are God's, and were made by Him. His laws govern all of them, while you and your brethren do not create; you only destroy, or endeavour futilely to destroy."

The devil, overcome by anger and offended pride, hissed in answer, but instantly was calm again, though he had no smiles. Martin saw he was an angry enemy, and was disposed to resist him in every way. The other fiends again fastened on the lone man their steady and tyrannous gaze.

"You may boast now. The vain fool is the loudest in boasting, but you will remember my words after some years, when the cold and damp of this earth have entered into your bones, and the natural weakening of your blood will cause the sun to seem less warm. Then you will think of my words, and may you remember them when you are ending your misery with the suicide's death!" There was the hissing passion of awful hate in these last words.

Martin shivered. At last the devil's cruelty had frightened him. He could not remain calm under the ordeal of that speech, and the united searing glances of the others. He bowed his head, his lips were

tightly compressed, and shut his eyes. But his heart cried, "Do not despair!" and he looked up resolutely. There was trouble, though, lurking in his eyes, and he shuddered again. With an effort of will, he braced his nerves and looked at the tormentor.

"As and when God wills I shall die, not as I will: and when I do die, be sure of this, the angels will be with me and not you!" His voice was calm and clear. It rang out defiantly, and he felt glad when he had spoken.

Another devil took up the burden of speech. Martin looked at him and then turned once more after an effort to glance defiance at the cruel tormentor. His place—the circle of blackened earth and dead vegetation—was empty; he had vanished. All the others of the concourse were there, now obvious devils. Though still beautiful and splendid, the lurid livery of Hell shone about them all. As the period of examination went on, their real appearance had slowly, gradually, grown more definite. Their beauty had become devilish. Every cruel word spoken had its effect on themselves. Their smiles were now baneful. Their brightness was dull and tarnished. They were evident members of the league of mischief and not ashamed—perhaps not conscious—of their self-exposure. The dusk of evening was growing.

"There is truth in the words of my comrade," said the new speaker, assuming cheerfulness, "but he is unduly mournful." A hum of acquiescence ran round the ring, and the burning fixity of the united gaze was broken. Martin was glad of this at once, and unjustifiably felt confidence in the new devil. "It is true that you who are mortal will never be immortal.

It is true that you have been the plaything of the angels, and that the Heaven which you have seen has been a phantom. But do not be disconsolate. To be dust is better than to be in Hell. Shrink not from the grave: it brings peace. Mortals, however, always shudder at the thought of the sepulchre, unless their minds are occupied with nobler ends. Ambition is man's resource. To do something, and to be some one higher than the herd before death comes, and, despite the terror, is the grand object. It is a race: the prize, applause and an honoured tomb; for if the tomb is the end of it all, better a golden one than the grave of a nonentity. There is your hope. Live, Martin, so that posterity shall mention you as the founder of this earthly kingdom, the maker of the greatest glory of this world."

"But God is the Maker!"

"I am not talking of this mass of atoms blindly whirling round its orbit, which, you say, God made: but of the reasonable world, the sensuous world, which man lives and makes. To mould and rule that world is the only great object man can have. An honoured memory—wrought by originality, wrought by power, wrought by blood—is his only immortality. You cannot shed blood, that must be the privilege of posterity, but by cunning of hand and brain, and by force, you can so mark this earth that the grandsons of your grandsons may say, 'He, Martin, the first of our men, built this palace, or reared that mountain, or cut this road, or founded that law!' That will be fame, and when the last man stands on this earth and gazes on the ruins of the palaces built, will he not remember that the originator of that lost

magnificence was—you! Make your mark now, and earn immortality during the length of this planet's life. That is all the immortality you can have, but it is better than years, millions may be, of dusty silence, spent by your foolish bones in a forgotten grave!"

"And man has no soul, no living future?" Martin asked, though he did not expect a true answer.

"Why should he have, any more than the fishes?"

"I know better! I have communed with angels."

"Angels!" cried a mocking voice, that of one of the listening fiends.

"I have been to Heaven!"

"Heaven!" there was a burst of laughter—riotous laughter, weird laughter.

"A vision—a delusion—a mischievous dream," said the original chief speaker. "We will construct such a phantom before we have ended. We will show you a Heaven, such as you visited. A mortal in Heaven!" Again there was rippling laughter, and then—was it a sigh which went up from that circle of doomed spirits? Martin looked up keenly, but he could not judge yea or nay. The devils were all smiling, but still further was their likeness unlike their earlier angelic one. Hell's flames were apparent on some of the more audacious of them, flickering about their presences, paining them, shaming them.

"Supposing man has no soul, and absolutely no chance of enjoying a part of God's spiritual kingdom, what is the use of his having lived?"

"The angels—and the devils—must have play-things!"

"You lie! Oh, devils! devils!" Angrily the

words burst forth from Martin. "Why do you insult Heaven and plague me thus!"

The fiends mocked his impetuosity with many voices.

Martin was calm again. Their mockery quickly helped him to control his wrath. "If so, why should I concern myself with earthly glory?" he added, quietly.

"Because it is the only glory you can concern yourself with!" came the cold answer.

"No, not the only glory!" Martin rose from his seat. Enthusiasm was in his face, his eyes flashed with the light of inspiration, real royal dignity was in his presence. "Not the only glory! If man lives only for those fleeting moments, they are best used by him in giving God, the Lord of Goodness, glory. Ye — followers of Satan, enemies of virtue, my enemies, leave me! I have heard enough of your lies, and your evil insinuations! I can see through your motives. You want to destroy my ideals here, to blast my world, to disappoint the angels, but I realise and I scorn your temptations. Mortal though I am, I command you, Go, the victory is with me!" — quickly he corrected himself — "the victory is with God!"

Darkness had come. It was all dark except for that three-quarter circle of flaming presences. Very evil did those spirits look, and they were evil. Martin, after his passionate speech, stood there trembling with the after-agitation of nervous effort. He waited for the next development in that cruel play. The woodland still brooded in its eerie silence, it was still a period of morbid peace.

A voice came calmly to him. It was the voice of the first of the spirit-speakers, he who had uttered the bold challenges to Heaven.

"Martin, you are over-hasty! We admire your fidelity and your boldness! Would it were expended in a nobler cause! You still believe you have been to Heaven?"

The devil waited for Martin's acknowledgment, but he scorned to answer vocally.

"You were the victim of a trick! The Heaven you wandered in was a phantom caused by angels!"

Dark though it was--too dark for mortal eyes to witness facial expression--the devils plainly saw refusal to believe writ large on Martin's countenance. That was all the response he made.

"You disbelieve us! You fool! We will make such a phantom. You shall see Heaven again. Oh, we can weave visions, as many a mortal knows. Turn and look at the bush behind you."

Martin turned and looked. Not a feature of the woodland world could he see. All was absorbed in the night's worst blackness. Slowly a new light commenced to flicker there. It began blue and quivered into silver. It spread into a stretch of brightness. Then there was a sudden change, as if the curtain of light were rent: a picture was disclosed.

A picture was disclosed! A phantom was shown! But not a phantom of Heaven. Hell was there! The horrid pillars of flame curved and belched up. Damned souls tossed in the tumult. Agony was triumphant!

Martin thought he heard the shrieks of those

tossing in the flames, but it was not their voices that he, shuddering, heard. They were but the unsubstantial creatures of a vision. The shrieks were of the baffled spirits who had been tormenting him. Cursing, lamenting, and writhing with their old, old fear, in a panic they fled. The vision vanished as if blotted out by an Omnipotent Hand.

Martin was alone, kneeling, trembling, praying. The reign of morbid peace was ended. He felt that his ordeal was nearly done.



## CHAPTER XX

### LONELINESS AND LOVE

WHILE kneeling in that valley of blasted flowers Martin became very weary, and, resting his head on the mound on which he had been sitting, fell asleep. Dreamless and peaceful was his slumber, at first. His tired body and brain enjoyed a precious period of absolute rest. The sustained bout with the enemies had exhausted him, now he knew repose.

For long the tempters, their desperation and hate gradually overcoming their panic, returned even once more to afflict him; his sleep became restless. A medley of thoughts, inspired by the evil companions, flickered through his brain; and although none of them was definite enough to wake him into consciousness, yet they took the restfulness out of his slumber. For something like an hour that persecution of his mind went on. Then he had an interval of solid sleep, followed by a period of dreams. The devils who stood and watched him as he slept in that corridor of dark trees and wasted turf saw the smiles flit over his face, and they smiled too. His dreams were evidently not unhappy, although they were woven by fiends.

He dreamt that he was wandering in a valley of

wondrous beauty. Birds sang, waters rippled, trees rustled, flowers shone. Through the glade came tripping dainty women: every one a glory. Hair, eyes, faces, in delightful variety, were all-excellent, forms superb. Joy glanced from their features, the smiles of love were wildly awake in their eyes, a dancing grace dwelt in their limbs. Marble-like were their arms, but marble in which pulsed the blood of affection. There was nothing coldly statuesque about them. Statuesque they were, but love-inviting too.

As every *peri* approached she threw flowers at Martin's feet, then with impudent lips kissed him and danced laughing away. His lips were determinately unresponsive at first, but as the joyous salutation went on the hunger grew in his heart for love—love—love! Lucy was out of his dream. The makers of that vision so planned it, that remembrance of her did not occur to him, but the sense of his loneliness was very heavy upon him, and ere all the dream-women had come to him the blood was passionate in his veins, and with gladness he was meeting their kisses. They had gone: the last of them with a parting glance, laughter-bright, passed beyond his view among the trees. With excited heart he tried to follow, but his feet were held by trailing flowers, and, except for an occasional silvery trill of laughter, he had no further evidence of the entrancing beings. They were gone: he was hungry for love.

That dream done, like a curtain over his mind heavy slumber fell about him; but although he was quite asleep, he knew that he wanted something. His need was crying: but its object was vague.

The curtain was lifted. He was lying in the valley

of shrivelled flowers. As he rested on the slope near where the devils had lectured him, he saw white forms dancing. Suddenly they were illumined, and the valley was bright with light. He was in the midst of a circle of beautiful women. Madly they danced round and round him, their eyes flashed with the fire of passion, their bodies and limbs shone as though golden sunshine were embracing them and contained in them, giving warmth to the ivory whiteness. They were not earthly dancers, compelled to put feet to earth; but in graceful delirious movement—now on the earth, now in the air—held their mad revelry. They rose and descended, danced and circled—hand holding hand—singing a wild song, until Martin was dazzled and dazzled by the medley of music and beauty. He shut his eyes, dead-tired with the exciting scene. Instantly the soft blow of a flower thrown on his lips caused him to look again. The dream-women as they danced pelted him with flowers, and speedily he was covered with—entombed in—sweet-smelling blossoms.

The second dream was gone. Uneasily—the hot blood heaving in his breast, burning his throat and pulse and fingers—he slept. The hungry craving was still in his heart. He knew what he wanted now, it was love—love!

The uneasy slumber passed slowly into deep sleep. There were no more dreams, and shortly after dawn he awoke. Before he opened his eyes he tried to remember what he had been dreaming. He could not recollect the details, but he knew that unusual visions had visited him. He opened his eyes. Something covered his face. Wondering, he sat up and

peered about. It was the grey hour of the morning. The world seemed cold. The trees sighed as the wind softly shook them. Martin saw the wide circle of dead grass showing where his enemies had held their court. He found himself sitting in a bed of thornless flowers. His coverture was a pile of many blossoms.

He stood, surprised, thoughtful, while the flowers fell from the folds of his garment. They were beautiful, too beautiful—being quite thornless—to be flowers of earth. He picked up a handful and smelt them. Pah! Too sweet! He threw them down; and walked a little way. Then he knelt and said the morning prayers. There was one prayer which he knew must be said, and yet he could not remember it. Annoyed by his forgetfulness he bullied his brains. He could *not* remember it! It was the prayer for Lucy and the babes, but evil ones still played with his mind, and caused Lucy and the children at the moment, to be forgotten. Evil ones can hinder prayers, but only partially and for a little while.

Martin bathed, breakfasted, and resumed his way. The flowers had recalled vivid recollections of the visionary pandemonium which had wantoned round him, but only a phantom of the dream was recalled; only enough to remind him that in his loneliness there was a void which his human heart craved should be filled.

Every moment as it passed found this desire growing. All the time of his banishment from Lucy he had yearned for her company, and in his loneliness had sorely missed the prattle and demands of the children, and although, owing to evil ministration,

the remembrance of his dear ones had temporarily gone from him, the heart-hunger which exile had inspired in him was still insistent, and with the indefinite inspiration of the midnight dreams had developed into a passion for human society, for human sympathy, for human love, which found expression in a pain that burnt his breast. The sudden and enforced state of solitude, throughout which even the bird-voices were silent and no animals were seen, had been in itself a trial severe; now his humanity cried out for solace. Oh, to hear a voice, to receive a good greeting, to hold a friend's firm hand again!

A voice answered—a human voice, a woman's voice trilling a lilting melody, a spring-song of hope and love.

Martin's heart seemed nigh breaking with sudden joyousness. He clapped his hands and shouted. Immediately his pent-up emotion had thus found expression he trembled. Had he frightened the singer by his boisterousness? Silence—a chilling silence—had succeeded his outburst. The melodious song was broken off abruptly, and not resumed.

So long had it been since he had seen or been greeted by any but devils, that he was in a fever to meet this new-comer. The idea that she might be Lucy, or a masquerading fiend, did not occur to him. His craving for the greetings of mankind at that excited moment drove out all other considerations, and the subtle influence of unseen devils stimulated his desire.

He looked here and he looked there, by the sides of the pathway, but nobody could he see. At last he obeyed the impulse to climb a tree and thence survey

the country. He did so, clambering into the branches with the agility and confidence of the hardy woodlander.

He looked down at the flower-spangled earth and then at the world around. On all sides waved the green arms of the forest. In front of him through a cleft in the foliage he could see, glimmering purple in the sunshine, his land of Beulah — his delectable mountains. The sight of them reminded him of his purpose in reaching them — they brake the devils' spell: he remembered Lucy, and his face was red with the blush of shame for having forgotten her. He did not realise that the fiends had cast their spells about him, and that in the eyes of the angels it was not his fault for having during that short while omitted to remember her. In the tree-top he said his customary prayer for the circle of loved ones, and afterwards, without casting round another look for the object of his climb, descended; but on the way down, through a gap in the branches, by chance or devil-design, he saw her. He stopped for a little while, quietly gazing: his heart was instantly cold with a thousand emotions.

A woman, not too sufficiently clad in a garment of flaming scarlet, was reclining before a background of blossoms, weaving a chaplet of daring-coloured flowers, golden, red and blue. On her head she wore a wreath similar to that in her hands. Her hair was black as the raven's wing, her eyes were fringed with jet-like lashes, her face and arms, and bosom and feet, wore the healthy colour of the sun. She was no alabaster maid, but a queen of the forest-land, filled with hot life, no lover of milk and whiteness.

As Martin gazed, his heart beat, beat, with excited insistence. He did not ask himself how the woman came there, but looked at her, and was conscious that the passionate desire which had been growing within him was touched into flame. He had in the recent hours longed so earnestly for human companionship, that the meeting with this beautiful being was like balm to his weariness. He yearned for her comradeship, and the comfort of her lips.

He leapt down from the tree and walked towards where the stranger was resting. But on the way he stopped. He stopped deliberately, though his heart was appealing to him to go on. He stopped and breathed the name "Lucy."

His true nature had spoken; the name, sacred to him, as no other earthly one could be, acted as a holy charm. He remembered his duty: to subdue all desires; at every cost to be absolutely true to the troth he had sworn when Zuron gave the marriage benediction.

Slowly, with faltering steps, the blood singing in his ears, he moved towards the mountains. He would resist the temptation. It was exceedingly hard to do that duty, but he did it. He went on, although all of him, except his conscience, was appealing to him to stay and speak with the weaver of wreaths.

A thousand subtle reasons and excuses entered his mind. He was alone and needed comfort. Was there any harm or wrong in speaking to a being when he had gone so triumphantly through a long and heavy ordeal of misery, want and loneliness? If he did wander for hours with the woman, who was

there to witness his doings?—had not the angels left him alone during the days of his trial, and would they spy on him now? Besides, the woman might be seeking comfort and help and comradeship too.

A multitude of devil-inspired suggestions ran through his brain. It seemed so desirable a sin, so simple a sin, so sweet a sin, would it be a sin? He continued his way firmly; fearing to look back. The mountains were nearer. Their blueness due to distance was diminishing. Already he was ascending rising ground, the long beginning of the mountain-slopes.

But ever he could see the dark face of the stranger with the burning eyes. It seemed to gaze on him from the mountains in front, from the trees on each side, from the grass at his feet. The past days of solitude had prepared his mind for a deep impression, and that face in the most unfavourable circumstances was one vividly to impress. The black eyes haunted him. The countenance enchanted him. He was entranced with the magic of woman, his heart was caught in a spell.

"Lucy! Lucy! Lucy!" repeatedly he murmured, as if he would gain strength from the sound of the name.

He heard a cry of delight behind him, but he would not turn from his determined course. He fixed his gaze on the area of blue sky shining above the highest mountain. In the bright void there could be no guile; but ever before his eyes was that strong beautiful face with its burden of controlled passion; even out of the blue it seemed to burn.

He was being followed! He could hear the swish of clinging garments as their wearer moved hastily



through the long-stemmed flowers and grasses; and the heavy breathing of one travelling at an unaccustomed pace. He clasped his hands, and with a frown on his brow pursued his course, but his lone heart yearned for him to stay and greet the new-comer. His humanity wrestled with his will and as yet was worsted. But his heart was not elate although he was still unconquered in the trial. He did not in fact recognise this experience as a temptation; it certainly was not such an one as he had expected in the old dream-days, for so subtly was it administered, he did not realise that to yield to it would be a sin. There was here no opportunity for the bold avowal which generally accompanied the triumphs of the saints. There was no demand for a positive yea or no, so that he could proclaim the yea, and glory—and die. His trial was a long-sustained, exhausting duel in which victory could never be celebrated, not even by the shade of a phantom laurel wreath binding his brow.

A soft voice in woman's sweetest modulation whispered winningly, "Stay, my hero, wait for me!"

Martin groaned; but went on.

"Stay—stay, my hero—my husband. I have waited for you so long!"

It was not the voice of Lucy, though the speech might well have been hers. Martin was touched by the words, strangely touched, it may have been by their quiet boldness, or by the pathos that was in them, or because they were reminiscent. He was, whatever the cause might be, so affected by them that he did stop, and turned towards the woman who called.

She continued to approach, until almost within arm-reach; then she stopped and spoke to him with her eyes. They were wonderful eyes, brimful of bold love's eloquence. Martin, gazing into their dark depths, felt magnetised—governed—a prisoner, the power of their spell grew as their love-light more brightly glowed.

The tempted man wrestled desperately with his inclination. Outwardly his face though pale was passive; but within his soul a battle raged. Invisible fiends exulted. But reason and will resumed their empire, the warring elements were subdued, the battle won. He slowly shook his head and was turning to go.

"I love you!" she breathed, raising her arms and leaning forward so that with taper fingers she touched his breast.

He trembled like a man in an ague, and despite his will raised his arms. She sank forward and hid her face in the folds of his cassock, so that he could not see her laughing eyes, while her arms clasped him closely, and he was aware of the beat of her heart. For one moment he lost control of himself. A throb of passionate delight ran through him. Loneliness no more! He had human love again! For one moment, and no longer, this madness lasted, then, he remembered, and with a sudden effort wrested himself from her and fled, running with all his haste through the forest towards the mountain.

He ran until he could run no longer, and then feeling safe—safe, but so lonely—threw himself on the grass and rested. He shut his eyes, but the insides of his eyelids seemed to hold the image of that woman painted on them. The eloquent appeal

of her look recurred vividly to him, and he opened his eyes again that daylight might dim the dangerous recollection.

What an escape it had been! He thought of Lucy—of Lucy deserted, wronged. That should not be! Lifelong loneliness, even death, rather than that! Despite this virtuous determination, however, the idea of loneliness was very repellent; he had had so much of it during the recent days which, though few in fact, seemed indeed eternity in miniature. This homeless wandering was most repugnant to his affectionate nature, and once more the longing for home and love was strong within him. He mused, perhaps he slept. Whether he slept or not, happening to look up, he started violently at seeing the woman standing before him.

"Again?" he cried angrily.

She smiled, and then said plaintively. "You do not know the strength of love. I have waited so long for your coming, and now you avoid me. You cannot know what loneliness means."

Martin sighed. That was all his comment.

"To be alone, and to long for one who brings happiness—to long and to know that the longing is in vain—that is worse than every other misery! That is my woe!"

"And the woe of others!"

"I am the only woman here. I am the only one here, and my husband avoids me!"

"I must not stay——" He rose to go.

"I love you! My hero!" She threw herself at his feet and clasped the skirts of his cassock with passionate hands. "Do not break my heart!"

He sighed and rose. She continued to kneel. He was aware that she was weeping.

"Do not chide me! Do not leave me! I love you! Love me or I die! For one hour if no more, be mine. Let me be yours! Give me that hour——" a sob choked her utterance.

As he looked down on her he suffered. It was pain to watch her pain; his heart was appealing to him, with a gentle word or a tender touch, to express his sympathy. He tried to resist the inclination, but his hand, rebellious, went forth and rested for a moment on the bended head. In response to the kindness she looked up. Her face was wet with tears, but new-sprung happy light shone in the great dark eyes. Martin despite himself flushed hot with joy that he had given her comfort. Clinging to him she rose from the ground and breathing words which passion made inarticulate flung herself on his breast, clasping him in a frantic embrace. For the moment he stooped so that his face was by hers, and hot kisses rained from her trembling lips.

"My love!" he heard her whisper. "My husband! my love!"

"No," he started back, but still she held him, still he could feel the beating of her heart, still to have her arms about him brought wild delight.

"One hour—one hour of roses!"

Should he accede? The thought tempted him. An invisible devil piped the tune of love. His pulses beat, his heart throbbed, in unison with that mad melody. His arms closed about her.

"My darling—mine!" she whispered.

He remembered.

"No!" he shrieked, and sprang back. She held him but he burst from her embrace. "I must not! will not!"

"You are mine!" she repeated: not in a whisper. There was challenge in the words. The woman was now a creature of command, imperious, no longer entreating. Her beauty had power. She stood there a eloquent majesty, endeavouring to overrule.

Martin was conscious of her dangerous fascination. Every one of her multitudinous charms spoke to him, appealed to him—to his lonely heart—to his natural chivalry; but the purity of a lifetime shielded him.

With her eyes she invited—commanded him to woo her. He took a pace forward and she smiled. He raised his right hand and her lips were pursed for kisses. With the forefinger he touched her forehead. Swiftly he made there the sign of a Cross. She sprang back with a shriek, and put her hands to her brow as though she had been bitten.

His suspicions were awake. "*Retro me, Sathanas!*" he thundered.

At once she was transformed. In place of the lovely woman cowered a devil.

Martin stepped back, startled by the change, frightened by his recent danger. A sense of angry shame flushed through him.

"Master!" sighed the fiend, in the tone of cringing submission.

Martin turned on his heel, shivering, and walked heavily, hastily away. He had triumphed, but he found no pride in his victory. He had escaped but not without scathe. He felt a humiliated victor.

## CHAPTER XXI

### PRIDE OF VICTORY

**B**UT God's angels, knowing more than he did, found pride in his victory. At once that mountain slope was full of new brightness as a whole company of them sprang into visibility. Martin did not see them at first; he saw nothing, heeded nothing, but thought of his weakness in the recent encounter.

He had heard the word "Master!" denoting the devil's acknowledgment of his victory; but neither heeded nor saw more of the fiend of his discomfiture and flight. Angels, however, told him about them afterwards.

The devil—a prince, though not *the* prince of Hell—defeated just when victory seemed so near, found himself threatened by angels. Flight was his only recourse. Instantly he opened his wings and flew, dashing like a flash of evil fire out of the valley. Through the forest he fled, blasting the leaves of many of the trees he passed, even in his panic not forgetting to loose a poisonous curse at those which to him were most annoyingly beautiful. Once in the frenzy of fear, for he was followed hard by angry angels who now and then beat him, he blundered full

against a tree, about the branches of which the flowers of Heaven were trailing, and was dashed by the influence of the flowers, smarting and humiliated, to the earth. The flowers of Heaven, holy and beautiful in the eyes of pure men and angels, could not be seen but as ordinary flowers by devils—blind to many beauties of the earth! The beaten fiend was up again at once, with desperate speed endeavouring to escape from his wrathful pursuers. Here and there, in and out of the trees of the forest and very near to the home which in his guile he had endeavoured to wreck, the sad fiend went, until sore with much punishment, sick with weariness, his wings in tatters, left alone in despicable weakness, he flapped his way laboriously, shamefully, disconsolately, down the dark way.

Thus the last of the tempters was defeated, and Martin, though sad and shamed, was triumphant; but that word of submission "Master!" occurred and recurred to him.

At length he looked up. He had reached the summit of the mountain and with brightened eyes peered round. God be praised! there was the sea, a broad grey band flecked with silver sunlight. Martin gazed lingeringly upon it. His heart was filled with gladness; his whole being sang carol. For a time he was lost in contemplation. He turned from the broad ocean to look at the other great sea of rustling green trees which spread like a colossal carpet to the far horizon. As if to complete his joy, he heard first the twittering and then the full chorus of bird-songs, and saw hundreds and thousands of songsters rising from above the trees, some soaring, many others

hastening towards him, giving him the dear world's welcome. Their music was kind balm to him. As his eyes grew accustomed to the enchanting panorama, he saw new sights, which rendered his object in seeking for the sea now fruitless. Here and there scattered about in the forest, at the summits of trees, he saw, gleaming, the gentle lights of the flowers of Heaven, and farther to the right, from that great distance, seemingly in a cluster, shone many, which his heart told him marked the part of the world of which his home was the centre. He was now all impatience to reach home. Home! There was no use now in his seeking for the long indirect way by means of the seashore. He was at last certain of the direction in which his dear ones were, and could march steadfastly towards it.

It proved, however, not necessary for him to find his way alone, for the angels, so long absent, were with him again. As he stood on the height, absorbed in the world around him, he did not immediately heed their presence. But at last, his admiring survey completed, he did see them, and rejoiced with very great joy. Zuron and Triest were there, as well as many others whom he knew, and some whom he did not know. Great was the triumph of the angels. Those who knew him best kissed him, and all in united benediction blessed him, until overcome by the goodness of their greeting, he sank on his knees and breathed heartfelt thanks to God. While he prayed the angels softly sang Heaven's triumph-chant.

It was a happy march homeward. Attended by his sparkling escort he journeyed, a glad, proud man, straight through the forest. They went the way that



the devil had flown along, and every tree which the foul fiend had blasted with his wings and poisoned by his curses was by angel-touch and blessing restored to health and beauty.

They went slightly out of their way to visit the glade wherein the court of fiends had held its session. Martin gazed with curious feelings upon the rings which marked the places where every devil had sat, and Nature had consequently been wounded. With delight he watched Triest march round the circle, by the touch of his feet immediately reviving the slain earth and grass and flowers.

The kind angel stood finally on the place where Martin had been seated. Once more that valley held no trace of devil influence.

The way was resumed. Angels marched in front and at the rear of the honoured man. Zuron and Triest were on either side of him; eagerly he asked and gladly they answered his many questions about Lucy and the babes. Angels were not, however, his only escort, for above, in a cloud, flew a multitude of birds, pouring out wealths of song, the accumulation of days of silence, most welcome to the ears which had recently so hungered for melody. And on both sides beyond the angels marched an army of animals—all the beasts of the field—a silent assemblage, in their mute way thus expressing sympathy with the man, their master, whom, because he cared for them, they loved.

So on the great gathering went, angels and animals doing honour to one man. Evening gathered, night came. Martin did not notice the darkness because of the light which the persons of the angels gave and

which illuminated as with the brightness of day the places adjacent. Dawn glimmered grey-blue, and then for a little while the procession of angels and man halted to deliver praise to God—a glorious hymn swelled out.

Soon afterwards they arrived at the parts of the world well known to Martin, at noon the long exile was ended. The home was in sight. The angels singing softly stood aside, leaving a pathway for Martin to pass through. He ran along, calling Lucy and the little ones.

With answering cries of delight they appeared at the door of the domicile, and in another moment the husband and wife were in each other's arms, while the children clung to their father's cassock, and, hand-in-hand, danced with joy.

So on that golden day there was happy reunion. The time of trial was done. The long-dreaded temptation had taken place and Martin had not succumbed. In the hours of that holiday all pain was forgotten: neither Martin nor Lucy spoke of their trials and sorrows. They were satisfied that victory was theirs. Their mission had not failed: the ideal life was preserved. Satan and his fiend-dominion were worsted!

Before dawn the next day Martin was waiting, restlessly ready to go the round of his work, to see how his floral, arboreal, bird and animal dependents were. At the earliest peep of sun he started: his round was a continuous course of glad greeting from the creatures, all in their several ways expressing their love for him; to his delight he found that all things were in order, the needful work had been

well done. He knew at once the doers of this goodness. During his trial the angels had done his work.

So eager was his visitation that he was home again by mid-day, having brought with him the basket of fruit which he had abandoned when he heard the plaint of the miserable fiend, and then speedily, while his mind was hot with mental eagerness, he put down on the tablets the narrative of his trial. Working with energy during the daylight hours of leisure he completed the story in three days, leaving it as a warning and a guide to posterity. Until that was done he could not bear to tell Lucy one word of it; but she told him—and he heard the story with trembling horror—of the temptations which she and the children had endured, and of the apparition of a faithless Martin.

Then the triumphant man read his tablets to Lucy while she sat weaving and the children slept. With concerned attention she listened to the tale of his and her danger, and when Martin had finished rose and kissed him warmly, repeatedly.

"My hero,—my king." That was all her full heart permitted her to say.

Martin had emerged from the ordeal feeling some honourable shame and a very little self-confidence; but the three days of enjoyment and repose which had elapsed since his return and the writing and re-reading of his story of deprivation and danger, with its epilogue of victory, had caused him to forget the shame and to renew the confidence. On that third day he walked through his world and felt secure—as he had never felt before. For the first time he ceased to be a man battling for an ideal:

he was at that zenith hour a monarch-conqueror, lord of that sphere, the worthy father of a perfect people, the maker of a most noble example.

The happy days fled past—days of golden glamour to Martin. Dearer and more beautiful than ever was that garden in which he dwelt; the creatures of it—of the two great kingdoms of Nature—appeared more wonderful and affectionate, as his feelings for the animals and trees and flowers became more paternal. He revelled in his beautiful life and found joy—glory—victory in every being and thing there. The angels visited him daily; and more confidently than ever he conversed with them. Confidence glided gradually into over-confidence. He spoke as a brother of the angels, not as a man, the receiver of favours. "It was a joyful life, and he basked in the sunshine of it. He began unconsciously to feel that in some way he was responsible for that sunshine. He remembered Lucy's proud and impulsive words. He felt the hero and the king. He smiled with new complacency when he thought of her terms of admiration. He remembered the devil's too. Master! Master! He had gained the title in the most terrible of the lists of knighthood! He had won the laurel by right of spiritual sword! He dreamed daydreams of future honour in Heaven.

So in the mind of the successful man, modest shame was turned into proud elation. Lucy knew nothing of this subtle change—grown from the seed of the devil's sowing, wrought by the saying of that last word, "Master!"—and tended to increase his confidence by her open admiration. Never before had she loved him more than she did then. She had

realised to the full how worthy he was of the woman's best devotion, and, womanlike, she told her gladness.

Thirty times the sun had set and risen since Martin—victor over Hell and all its subtleties—had returned from his wandering, thirty days of increasing delight and pride they had been. Never had he been happier than during their passing; in the after days they seemed to him painted scarlet and golden in Time's grey calendar. Then came the crash.

In the exaltation of triumphant vanity, while walking through the avenues one evening, when dusk had fallen, and the birds—except for occasional songsters still fluting—were twittering good-night, when the animals were seeking their lairs, and all was peace—forgetful of the meaning of the glowing celestial flowers there shining—he thought again of the influence and rule of man over the creatures, pondered unduly on the truth that unsullied man is brother to the angels, and of the fact, too much remembered, that he had been tempted to sin and had not sinned; that he was unsullied man.

His thoughts naturally went back—over the abyss of space and time—to the old monastic days; he remembered with amusement the grotesque legends of devils worsted by very human, almost farcical, saints, which were the favourite lore of the tonsured brethren. He laughed the quiet confident laugh of triumph at those recollections.

Gradually beyond those feats of riotous virtue his thoughts travelled to the vastly grand tale of Eve, the Serpent, old Adam, and the legendary beginning of human woe. He pictured the other Eden—the

background of the picture was his own Eden—with Eve there. She, having disobeyed and eaten, was tempting her lord to disobey and eat. Martin's active fancy, filled with details of actuality, coloured the scene completely. He compared the incidents of the two temptations—his and hers—and flattered himself with the thought that the devils had recognised the need of directly worsting him, had tried their utmost, using every diabolical means, and with ignominy had failed.

He laughed triumphantly, and listened to the wild music of one of night's songsters perched on a bough overhead. The bird seemed expressing his proud unspoken gladness. The message of the innocent song was misread by the pride-sick man.

He was still in the picture-land of Eve's temptation and wrapped in proud dreams when he reached home. Lucy greeted him with a smile, and pointed to the sleeping babes, a pretty pink group illumined by the light of the heavenly flowers, which hung in clusters on and under the roof.

Martin gazed, admired, and, at the same time, was full of his visions and vanity. He was hot with the impulse to tell his triumph.

"The perfect people!" Lucy said archly, smiling at the babes' cherubic beauty. Unconsciously it was she who set rolling the fatal ball.

"The perfect people!" Martin echoed, though not in the playful manner of her remark. "Adam failed and lost his world. Our world is saved," he blurted out abruptly, inconsequently.

Lucy looked at him wide-eyed and frightened.

"Martin!" she cried.

"Wandering in our Eden, I have been thinking of my temptation and that of the Adam of my old earth. That world was ruined because Adam fell. The Adam of this world is triumphant——"

"Hush! Martin! Martin!" she cried, clasping his arm. "God helped you, and the angels——"

"The angels, yes," he was strangely blind to his sudden danger, "but they were absent—invisible. Let the honour be ours. We fought the battle alone and won."

"Hush, hush, dear. There was God—He always helps——"

"I won," he repeated, loud and exultantly, in his mad vanity, not hearkening to her.

• Suddenly there was darkness. The faces of the children were no longer visible. The light of the flowers of Heaven was gone, the flowers were dead. Lucy shrieked. Martin shivered. They were frightened. A cold wind, wailing, travelled through the world. Devils, laughing riotously, rose from lurking places in a covey of flames: the mortals did not see them.

The ideal life was ended. Martin, through vain-glory, had sinned. That world was the perfect world no more.

## CHAPTER XXII

### AN ALTERED WORLD

NEITHER of the mortals slept that night ; in the midst of their darkened world they felt too wretched to venture to lie down. Lucy spent the time in prayer, and in comforting Martin, saying never a word of rebuke. He, with bitter unspoken self-upbraiding, walked continuously up and down, gazing round piteously now and then, in the vain hope of seeing the flowers of Heaven rekindled. Except for the blaze of the ever-burning fire there was no light now on that world.

Martin was a man dazed. His downfall was so sudden, his sin had been so simple. The catastrophe stunned him. After all his strenuous effort, his sacrifices, his victory, to be accounted guilty and to endure all the consequences of guilt, and only for a little jubilation. He was at first to the depths despondent, and then as the serious consequences presented themselves to him, to the least possible extent aggrieved. He had lost all, he was no longer the fortunate mortal, his ideals were broken. Had he for such a small outburst of vanity to endure punishment which could hardly have been worse if he had indulged to the full all the tempta-





## AN ALTERED WORLD

tions offered to him? The whole thing must be a mockery, a hideous dream! In his despair he questioned the justice of Heaven.

But it was only in his first despair that he did so; quickly he recovered from that prostration of cowardice. His great pain, however, grew worse when he thought of Lucy and the babes, his sin involved them in suffering similar to his. He hid his face and groaned. The punishment continued. The instant he shut his eyes he saw within the lids a repetition of that vision which had come to him in Heaven—the vision of the perfect people. In a flash the entire picture was there—the smiling populace, the ideal of life, of beauty physical and spiritual, of happiness. The vivid recollection wounded him. He opened his eyes and flinched with jarring pain as he looked unavailingly about the world he had wronged, and realised the wonderful possibility lost. All that golden future was now swept away and himself was its destroyer.

He remembered the several warnings given to him, beginning with the moon-angel's repeated, "Lose not your humility," and the loving advice of Broon—ah! memory struck a dagger through him—this was the crown of his sorrows—that Broon's loving care was wasted. To think of that best-loved of the angels had been always comforting, now the thought brought a heart-pang, because Broon's kindness and teachings had been in vain. Martin pondered sadly on the forfeited joys of Heaven, and knew that sorrow would be there through him. He remembered the guardian-angel who flew in deep dejection over the Elysian Fields, because one other man had through

weakness wasted the opportunity of a world. Now he was in similar case!

Bitterly unhappy Martin! As the previous thirty days had been the zenith of his life's happiness, so the dark hours of that night were the nadir of his misery. But in his severest depression the brave heart of his manhood fought for him—for actually, through and through, he was a hero; he thought, practically, what was to be done, and arrived at a decision.

He went to Lucy and with gentle hands held her face, so that he could see its expression in the fire-light. His heart warmed because she smiled. He kissed her with cold lips, and made her sit on her favourite seat. Then holding her hand, he said:

"I need not speak of my sin, but—I *have* sinned, and already a change has resulted in this world. My first thought now must be you—you and the children. I have sinned and I must suffer, but you and they are sinless and innocent. I may yet save almost all by paying a willing sacrifice. I will go away. The rest of my days shall be spent in exile. You may then, by the dear mercy of God and the love of the angels, be permitted to train and teach the children, so that their future may be white—as it might have been had I—not—sinned."

His voice broke. It was a great penalty he was willing to pay, perpetual banishment from the dear ones, loneliness and homelessness, just when home-life was so particularly sweet.

Lucy kissed his lips warmly.

"You are my husband, my place is with you."

"I cannot stay here and you cannot go with me,"

he continued firmly. "I am the culprit, I must pay. It is your duty to abide here for our children's sake. You and they are still sinless. Paradise will still exist for you."

"There cannot be Paradise when my husband is out of it." Lucy's words were as firm as his, but her voice was wonderfully gentle and sweet. Martin looked at her and realised her greatness. "My place is with you, and the children's is with the father who loves them. If our life here is altered, we will make a new home elsewhere; and as for Paradise, where there is love there is Paradise, and we have love."

Touched beyond measure by her true womanliness, her gentle strength, he drew her to him, and for a while they held each other in a silent embrace. She was the ruling woman now—ruling by self-sacrifice and wise love.

"You must let me go for a time at least, my dearest," he pleaded. "Let me meet my punishment and exile like a man. When I have had my fill of solitary pain, and founded a home for you and our little ones, I will return, and then again, together, we can fight for a new ideal!"

"No, Martin, I shall be punished if we are separated. My place is with you. You need me."

"Ah, yes," he sighed.

"And the children—I have confidence in them."

Tears, touched into being by her kindness, were streaming down Martin's face. He endeavoured by effort of will to overcome them, but they were uncontrollable. He turned aside, and raising his hands towards Heaven, cried, with a passionate voice:

"O God, I have sinned—I have fallen. 'On my head alone be the punishment!'"

There was the sound of angel's wings and Triest appeared. He was carrying his spear as on that day when first he met Martin, but his countenance, though, as usual, bright, was unusually sad. The man's first impulse was to hide his shamed face, but an honourable pride kept him brave; he went slowly to meet the angel. Lucy followed, trembling.

They saw at once that Triest knew.

"Where is the light of the flowers?" the angel asked quietly.

"I have sinned," said Martin.

Triest leaned on his spear and bent his head. Lucy could see the sorrow written on the angel's face.

"Forgive us," she cried.

Triest looked up and took her hand, then gently said:

"It is not mine to forgive, but God is all-merciful, and in His time He will forgive. This is a very great trouble. The sin was a grievous sin. Vanity is the chief pitfall. Half Hell is peopled through it. You may think—Martin has thought—that it was a very small fault for so great a penalty; but the least sin in such a state as this was, is too grievous and far too great, for it is the first sin, and after that all sins are easy. The first sin is the parent of an awful progeny. O Martin, your fall has caused sorrow in Heaven—but I will not add to your punishment, which is heavy enough. Your life here, and that of Lucy and your successors will be changed. The angel-sight bestowed on you by

iron during the first aerial journey is taken from you. Angels will come to this earth and be about you, helping you, guarding you, loving you, but henceforth they will be invisible."

"Must Lucy suffer too, and the innocent babes?" Martin asked in a storm of anxiety. "Cannot I go alone and leave them with the Paradise they have not forfeited?"

"We must not be parted," said Lucy. "We must be together!"

"Lucy does right. True husband and true wife cannot live apart. They are really one, the complement to each other, spiritually indivisible. Further, through your sin the whole world must suffer. It is no longer an ideal world, for its idealism is broken. The animals, birds, flowers, everything—even the angels—will feel the difference. Sin alters everything." •

"Hopeless, hopeless!" mourned the broken-hearted man.

"No," sang out the angel, his voice was like a bell, bearing a brave message. "There is always hope. You have failed in the first ideal, now fight for the second. You have sinned once, now struggle not to sin again. The world is changed by this one sin, but not ruined, if you will the contrary. Live now, not to retain a particular ideal, but to do duty. Duty lives. Duty always lives."

Martin's sad, changed face lit up once more, his eyes flashed. He raised his form proudly, his head was set back, as is the warrior's who awaits the last assault, and whose one wish is to take the inevitable death like the true warrior.

"Duty! duty!" he repeated earnestly. He went to Lucy, raised her hand and kissed it, signifying that he recognised the need of her help and goodness.

"Duty lives always," said Triest. "Do your duty. That will please Heaven, and the angels will rejoice again through you. But there may be cheerless years before you: many of the blessings you now enjoy you will lack; nevertheless, hope and work! That is the lot of all the best men on every inhabited world. In the ages to come the ideal now lost may be regained, and I promise you this as a solace from Heaven; if, through your life and the virtue of men, there is full hope again, the angels will reappear. Now, farewell."

He raised his hand and blessed Martin and Lucy separately.

Then he walked to the domicile—its roof almost destroyed through lack of the flowers that had covered it—and blessed the children one by one, beginning with the youngest. Each smiled in its sleep as it received the benediction. The mute parents could see the little ones in the light of Triest's presence.

"Farewell!" he said again sadly, and then without another word or look he opened his wings and flew slowly away, his spear was hanging point downwards, the signal of grief.

Martin and Lucy, standing hand-in-hand, watched the kind angel until he appeared no more than a moving star, dwindling; then he was quite lost in dawn and distance. They felt alone. They were alone, with a strange, new, hard life in front of them.

Daylight spread rapidly; each moment showed clearly the havoc wrought. The flowers on the roof

of the home which had always been so gay and bright hung brown, shrivelled, dead ; every one of the multitude of trees that once had borne them was similarly burdened with floral wreckage. The whole world looked strangely dull, the brilliance which had glistened in every leaf and grass-blade was gone—the mortals saw with mortal and not angel sight. Everything was altered, the very sun seemed less bright, his beams had lost warmth. The world was changed indeed.

The children woke, and, conscious of strange discomfort, cried in miserable chorus. Martin and Lucy gently soothed and caressed them, and were punished with artless questions. "Why is the morning so different?" asked the elder ones. "The sun is forgetting to be warm," they said.

Martin answered sadly. "Times have changed."

Already he was enduring the pains of his long penance.

He went his rounds among the animals. There was difference also in them. They no longer moved to meet him, or walked as was their wont a little way with him, but were indifferent to his passing. The birds sang, but not in the old tumultuous way. They piped and called to their mates, but it was chastened music, the seeking of food seemed now their chief and general occupation ; all Nature felt the change and was changed.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### IN THE MIRROR OF YEARS

IN the afternoon of that same day, Martin began preparations for leaving the place of their old home. Excellent as it was in the easy life of Eden, it would not be adapted for that rough hard struggle which Martin saw was before him. He must seek a new abode, not burdened with sad memories.

On the next day he found it, near the cavern where he kept the tablets of his history. Under the brow of a hill, whose other side was washed by the sea, was a large dry cave, well-lighted in the daytime by a hole in the rock over the entrance. In the dell in front of the cave was a brook of fresh water, which flowed from a spring on the hill-side. Very near the cave was a hollow formed by over-hanging rock where a large quantity of fuel and other commodities could be stored, while another narrow opening in the hill-side could with stones be adapted to serve as an admirable place for the ever-essential fire.

Martin's first business was to carry to the cavern soft moss and sweet-smelling herbs. Then, in a busy hour, he gathered whatever dried sticks and fallen wood he could find, in readiness for the fire he purposed to bring. He hurried home to pack his



implements and the domestic utensils preparatory to an early march on the ensuing day.

That night while, for the last time in that place of sweet history, he was lying awake, his mind full of plans and purposes, by the side of the fire, he determined on an act which for that world was revolutionary. Hitherto his work had been to help the animals—now they should help him. After a few hours of fitful slumber he rose, purposing not to wake Lucy yet, but she heard his movements and rose too, determined then and in all things to help and encourage him. In the darkness they knelt and said sad matins. It was a very cheerless hour, most suggestive of the future. Darkness, still strange to them, and eerie, was round them, they were alone, and dependent on themselves; but even then they had this consolation, that they had each other, so they entered on the new future with prayer—prayer and activity.

Lucy quickly prepared breakfast—warm milk, baked eggs and fruits, an encouraging, quite idyllic, repast. As soon as Martin had eaten and drunk he began a preliminary pilgrimage to the new home for the purpose of transferring fire thither. He selected a resinous brand, well burning, from the pile which had been kindled for the first and only time on the second day of his life on that globe, and carried it as a torch. Fast in his girdle he carried two other sticks of dependable wood to be lighted in turn as the previous ones burnt themselves out.

It was a dark and lonesome journey. The world was still covered with the pall of starless and moonless night, and haunted with a great significant silenc

Only the spitting of the resin in the burning brand, the startled fluttering of awakened birds,—there were no bird-songs in that hour—the dull beat of the waves on the sea-shore, the swish of the damp grass as he made progress through it, broke the stillness. It was, indeed, a weary and anxious journey, for to prevent the flame from dying, required the greatest care in holding the wood, and occasioned slow progress with frequent stoppages. It took him more than three hours to reach the cavern, but once there he soon made his arrangements. He lighted the prepared pile of dry wood, and cunningly banked it with turf and clay so that it should last for a very long time. That successfully accomplished, he became more cheerful, especially as day had now come, and after a plunge and swim in the sea to rid himself of the smoke and resin on his hands and face, ran the whole way back to Lucy, who had already bathed and fed the children.

Then came the last sad work of the abandonment of the old home. There were tears in the hearts—will kept them from the eyes—of Martin and his wife. Were it not that Heaven is ever just, it would have seemed that that day of many sacrifices and of bruised remembrance was punishment enough for Martin's sin ; but Heaven *is* ever just, and the sacrifice and sorrow only make the mortals more anxious to complete their task.

Martin's revolutionary idea was carried into effect. He seized a huge ox by the horn and led it to the eminence. Quickly he loaded it with the various household goods, and fastened the burden with long trailers which in the past happy days had been woven together by resourceful Lucy into strong stout ropes.

She had not thought then that they would have been used for this purpose, but they proved most useful, and Martin, even in that hour of sadness, rejoiced at his wife's inventiveness and quiet, real help.

At noon the journey began. Martin carried the baby on his shoulder, the two next-youngest were perched securely on the obedient beast. The eldest son, excited with the expedition and his pretty responsibility, gently drove and carried birds which his mother had domesticated. The wanderers only stopped once on that journey, and that was when a curve in the avenue would put the old home out of sight. Then they turned and looked a long farewell at the familiar scene. The house of branches—now bare, leafless, flowerless—stood there a naked wreck. The fire still flamed and sent up a column of grey smoke, but soon it would be embers and then would slowly die out. Farewell—farewell to that place of once glad happiness, where angels had often been!

They went very near the river bank whence came the clay of which the tablets were made, and impelled by an inspiration, Martin went out of his path to look for the slab on which he had inscribed "Lucy." He found it at once, though tall flowers and grass waved over it. It was uninjured by the weather; the beloved word deeply impressed on the firm clay was still quite legible. Well he remembered the joyous day of its inscription: he looked again at the spot where Lucy had sat on the opposite bank of the stream, whence she had thrown the wreath; and then, expressing his much concern by kissing the baby—who, unconscious of family woe, crooned and gurgled in his arms—rapidly followed the slow-moving travellers.

Lucy and the children, though very weary, were delighted with the new home. Her first purpose was to make it beautiful with trailing flowers, dim successors to those which came from Heaven, but withal beautiful and brightening, gathered by herself and her eldest son and daughter. After Martin had set free the ox, tended the fire, gathered still more fuel and taken further measures to increase the comfort of the home and household, they had the evening meal and went early to sleep. Now that the transference was completed and the family was installed, Martin's depression vanished: he felt again a hopeful, resolute man. He would fight his battle bravely, he would serve God and his dear ones faithfully, he would do his duty thoroughly. With hope-brightened eyes he kissed his wife, and thanked her with that kiss for her loving loyalty. She smiled to see him glad. Thus the new life began.

It was a life of constant toil and continuous anxiety. The world was completely changed: it seemed that the very climate was permanently altered, for cold rain fell more frequently; there was mist and damp, and the mortals had to take many precautions—precautions never needed in the sinless estate—against want and illness. In the earlier days it had been always summer, spring, and autumn, in some part of their world. Trees in one place or other were always bearing fruit, some had borne fruit monthly, now the seasons came slowly and alone, in due order, and had it not been that through their very wealth of previous produce the mortals had stored much fruit, the winter they were then entering

would have been a terrible one: as it was, economy and wit had to be used to eke out and supplement the essential food. For the first time then, Martin caught and Lucy cooked river fish.

Spring came at last. Another baby was born, and Lucy travailed with very great weakness and pain. Her recovery was anxiously slow, but the love of Martin, the fresh life of the world, and the increasing heat of the sun helped her, and at length she resumed her place, the helpful, sinless mother, and so well governed her home, that she made of its narrow limits a paradise of love.

During that spring the clothes which had lasted miraculously during the sinless period, wore out. With the rags of his cassock waving about him, Martin was forced to work another and a sadder revolution. He sharpened one of his spades into a spear, with the rope of trailers trapped and bound an animal, and then slew it. He loathed the deed, but necessity was obdurate; and with skins so obtained he clothed his family and himself, and made the cave more comfortable. But from that necessary wrong, that unwilling murderous deed wreaked on the animals, was born in them fierceness and fear. Martin, their former friend and master, was now their hunter, and as the slaughter was continued—for meat as well as fur—their habits changed. Whenever Martin appeared in sight, they fled, and all his cunning was required to get near and capture them. Fear turned to wrath. The demoralisation of the beasts spread and worsened. The bolder and stronger animals attacked and killed the weak. The lust of slaying easily led to the animal world's

ultimate wrong ; so the beast of prey was evolved. During the lapse of years the appearance of the creatures changed, new species were developed, snouts hardened, jaws became more powerful, horns more dangerous, and the fiercest animals most daring. Owing to an injury done by an angry beast to one of his youngest children, who then narrowly escaped a horrible death, and to repeated animal-depredations, Martin was compelled to surround his home with a stony barrier, within which he kept his stores, his trained oxen and milch cows, and his wife's pets. Whenever he ventured from that stronghold, it was with risk ; but hardihood, experience, and frequent want, made him bold, and he fought and hunted his new enemies with desperate resolution.

Meanwhile the world became sadly like a wilderness. Wild herds, fighting and journeying, trampled the grass and bruised and killed the flowers, destroyed trees, broke the river banks : a great expanse went to waste. Except for a few small fenced-in patches among the hills where Martin had sown and cultivated a kind of corn, and about their dwelling where chosen flowers were cherished, that land was perforce abandoned to become desert, until the descendants of Martin and Lucy, growing in years and numbers, could make settlements for themselves, and wrest the country back from ruin.

It was a desperately hard and strenuous life, but not entirely without enjoyments and grand purposes. Lucy always maintained a holy home, so that on the days of roughest experience there was comfort and happiness at their end. During those years of deprivation and struggles and pain, she kept her quiet

ideal; she accomplished the hardly-possible; she never sinned; and thanks to her white example, Martin succeeded in accepting and accomplishing Triest's ideal and not sinning a second time; for the war with the animals, though miserable and pain-making, was urgently inevitable, and so not culpable. The mortals reduced its horror as far as mortals could, for as soon as the pressing wants were satisfied, no more beasts were slain. Indeed only during that first rigorous year did the mortals eat meat—other than fish—except when need of clothes caused slaughter, and it would have been guilty waste in the circumstances for them not to have used the resultant strengthening food. But henceforth man and the beasts were enemies. Martin did all the kindness he could for the world, but that was little. He strove successfully to redeem his first great sin, and his success was due more to Lucy than to himself, for her charity and purity, bravery and sweetness, kept him strong and faithful in the new ideal. In just the same manner she saved the children, who numbered in all, nine. The little ones, in their earlier years, sometimes quarrelled—punishment this to Martin!—and had their puny selfishnesses; but the affection, the wisdom, the example of their mother so helped them that they too were weaned from the natural weaknesses; they united in making increasing positive efforts after the sinless ideal; and the strenuous years went by without the ever-remorseless, effort-making devils gaining a new crumb of victory. Work it was and angry necessity, as well as the simple devotion of Lucy, which spoilt the game of the fiends, and regained the world. A new generation and a sinless,

grew up and made homes in other places, recreating Eden wherever they settled.

Martin found time to continue his History. The whole story of his Fall and its consequences was written. Its frequent reading and the splendid example of every one in that increasing community were continued powers for good. As the days went by and the world improved, new hopes and ideals developed, and Martin and Lucy—grey-headed had they become now, but as ever, a handsome pair—began to consider the far future. Lucy was in this the prime mover and stimulator.

She pointed one day to a cliff of clay and said to Martin, "Write some ideals for the future."

Martin took his best chisels, and climbing the cliff, wrote in great letters what Lucy told him.

### CANONS FOR THE FAR FUTURE AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD

The closer to Nature the nearer to God: There shall be no home not surrounded by a garden.

No song-bird shall ever be slain.

Simplicity is the life of beauty, in dress, in manners, in life.

An unkind answer is a grievous danger.

An unclean thought is an insult to beauty.

The open world is the temple of God: There shall men always worship.

A liar when convicted by his fellows or himself must retire into the bare wilderness—to the place



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of the liars—and in solitude shall remain, away from the beauty of the flowers and the company of men, until he effectually repents.

He who is selfish is to himself an enemy and a hindrance.

The possession of wealth is an opportunity to give. There can be no wealth on this world divorced from beauty.

All men are equal in the sight of God, all are the children of one loving couple. He who sins, until he effectually repents, lapses from the universal aristocracy.

There can be no personal servitude.

Greater talent means greater responsibility and better means of unselfish utility.

Every one is to learn as much as he can of the building of the flowers and trees and sun, rivers and mountains, animal-life, religion and love.

There shall be no tombstones or builded sepulchres. A sweet memory is all the monument required. Man's esteem wrought in stone is foolishness.

To be good and retain goodness is the sufficient object of life.

That was Lucy's public legacy to the world. She left it also—better than any precepts—an unsullied example.

Surely the years went past—many years—some dark, some bright, some even golden, especially in the later days when hope—based on splendid virtue—was strong in the world.

Martin was walking alone through the land towards the home of his Paradise, recalling memories of that primeval state. He was vigorous still, though his years were many, for in that world with its freedom from mental worry and nerve-strain, it was possible for men to live for a century and still be in the prime of life, but he was not so strong as he had been in the first years of his great struggle with wild life and hard living. His heart was full of kindness and he was smiling to some children, when they shrieked. He heard an angry noise behind him, but, before he could turn fully, a great beast dashed against him, and hurled him down. Then the violent creature continued its way, flying before the wrath of gathering men. It had by its brute means wrought the animals' vengeance for the Paradise they had lost through this prone man's sin.

Martin was not injured physically, but the shock of the blow was great. He lay there more stunned than hurt, but he could not move. He asked that his wife might be sent for. Anxious feet soon bore the message, and with her utmost speed she came. Before she arrived, however, his eyes brightened, and he recognised his whereabouts. He bade them carry him to a place thereby, and with his old hands he tore aside the thick matting of dried grass and reeds, the repose of years. Willing arms assisted in the task, and wondering eyes saw revealed a small clay tablet, preserved whole, though very ancient, with "Lucy" inscribed on it.

Martin's first-born son, who, with Lucy, at that moment arrived, bent to raise the tablet. It had become detached from the earth. He held it to his

father's lips who kissed it once again. Then Martin asked that he might be carried to the eminence where the old home had been, and hand-in-hand with Lucy—lovers to the last were they—he was borne thither.

They laid him on the little hill, and for a time he gazed silently at the beautiful world. It was a goodly sight. He sighed and leaned back, his head resting on Lucy's knee. Then suddenly he sat up, delight was in his eyes, surprise on his face. He looked a man transfigured.

"Broon!" he cried, and then fell back. Lucy kissed and closed his eyes.

Triest's promise had come true. The angels had reappeared. New flowers, better than all others there, flowers yielding light, sprang up about the eminence. Lucy, who remembered, said they were flowers of Heaven.

There was very great gladness in the world.

THE END.

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